

UNDERSTANDING AMERICA

LANGDON MITCHELL

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By
Edwyn
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Author of

"THE NEW YORK IDEA," etc.

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UNDERSTANDING AMERICA

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M. L.

Marcus Aurelius, in the opening pages of his book, mentions gratefully the names of one and another man and woman at whose hands he had acquired knowledge, or from whose example and companionship he had received some moral gift, or insight.

One had shown him the beauty of courtesy; another had instructed him in fortitude; from a third he had learnt the arts of rhetoric; and each he thanks gravely, and in turn.

But, if following the great Emperor, in this attestation of gratitude, for benefits received, I should seek to thank you for so much given, for the generousities of a lifetime, there would be no end to the list. Nor, if I spoke of your strength of soul, or your gayety and wit; or, of that abundance of grace and charm which all your friends know and rejoice in; still, I should not be thanking you for somewhat relevant to this book which deals so largely with the problem of human happiness: of that which all men desire, and to which few attain. But, Happiness, that is, the habit of heart and quality of mind which make us receptive of happiness: that fulness of life, that openness to all impressions, that overflowing pleasure in things, that warmth and eagerness of soul which goes out to meet and embrace the world gladly, and which, like flame itself, warms and rejoices whoever is near it: this is indeed relevant to the volume in hand; and, this, all of this,—though my thanks may not have the importance of those of an emperor, a soldier, and a saint,—yet, this is, indeed, my splendid and delightful debt owed to you, and of which this informal and slight volume is, at least, a grateful testimony.

PREFACE

The miscellaneous essays of which this volume is, in large part, composed, were published, more or less recently, during the last year, in this and the other magazine, and are connected and bound together solely or in the main, by their subject matter; by the fact that they treat of America; of American men, or things, or ideals.

The duty of a writer, as well as his pleasure, is, without doubt, to write readable things; and, I confess, the book in hand might have been more readable, had it been written all at one time; at a single sitting, so to say. The whole would have been shorter; the parts less repetitive. But, such interest as the volume may possess, would not, in this case, have been greater. After all, some books happen, as lyrical poetry happens. They are the products of occasion and circumstance and as such, they must be taken. Their weakness is that they are not consecutive: their virtue, if virtue they have that they derive from some immediate and more or less emotional experience. The books of a higher order have been long revolved in the mind, and accordingly are at once simpler and more profound.

That a man, in this last decade should have America much in his thought, is only natural. The times compel us to reflection. And, no doubt, this will be increasingly the case. The older Europe was shattered by the war. The newer Europe is in secret process of formation.

Fascism and Bolshevism are new ideals. What have we to oppose to these systems? Or, what have we Americans to offer in the place of that strange, flat, and *unprincipled* Internationalism on which the Pacifist tendencies idly base themselves? What have we to offer Europe or ourselves in the way of art and intellect, of created values, which will be more powerful, have more *future* to it, than what Europe now offers us?

Many of our younger, more brilliant men, when they publish their thoughts on America, think and write of the country as of a Cloud-cuckoo-land; of our system of things, our institutions, as being highly, if not solely, theoretical. They speak of America as if America were an Utopia; an Ideal floating in the mind, and not a place; as if it were a political and social Theory, not a People; and too, as being something totally new and inchoate; as if we had no history, no antecedents, no past; no greatness in the past. It appears to me that in so doing they are living, feeling and thinking in a state of illusory detachment; and that this falsifies their conclusions. To them their view may seem the right and natural one. But, is it so?

For my part I cannot so conceive of America. The power, the tremendous power of our political and moral ideals, has its roots in the past of a thousand years, and yet more; our political theory, our temper as a people, our way of life: all that we value and care for is the outcome of slow growth, and has had its great protagonists. We are a people, even a race; though lately formed, and now for centuries to undergo a further process of formation, or re-formation: from which we allow ourselves to hope higher things than what we hitherto have had or

been. But, we do not, therefore, undervalue what we now are, or what we have been and done in the past. From the mingling of our many races we hope, indeed, for greater men,—or, at least of a more varied greatness;—for a richer and more gifted humanity, a nobler and happier state. But we do not, therefore, cast Washington and Lincoln away; nor the ideal of individual liberty; nor the Common Law; nor the belief in *Republican* institutions and the representative principle, as opposed to what seems to us, so fatuous and so fatal; as opposed, that is to those creeds and systems of Chaos: government by a Dictator, or government by registering in immediate law or other action, the momentary passion of the mass of men; which is to say, our own hasty and unenlightened prejudice, our own momentary passion.

We Americans were not born in the air, or in New Guinea. We were born and brought up, here, as our fathers were before us. These hills and woods, these plains and ranges of mountains are our country. To us, too, the soil we tread is sacred and revered. After all, our home is not a hotel in Paris; but is here, on this American earth, which we plow or see plowed, and the man who does it is our neighbor and friend. Are we, therefore, less believers in the other, the ideal America? Whether in town or country, man is a local creature. He has his own personal past. It made him. He knows it did; and so too, he knows that his forefathers made that of the nation. We are, therefore, not parasites, or detached, because we cannot be. We are not even incarnations of pure reason. Are we, therefore, doomed to a blind and stupid conservatism? The American is a free spirit,—none freer on the earth. But he knows, instinctively, that the past is power; and that

whatever people possesses the most of that power and combines it most readily with reason, and the necessity of the present moment, that people will be strong, fruitful, and happy.

LANGDON MITCHELL.

New York City
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SOME YOUNG AMERICANS

I WELCOMED the later comer, asking him to be seated, and indicating to him that the cigars were on a side-table and these with the nuts and biscuits were at his disposal. There was a tacit understanding that further formalities were to be waived in the interest of not breaking in upon the talk, which on this special Friday happened to be personal and directed to me. So, in answer to a question which had been put me, before the last of my youthful guests appeared at the door, I replied: "No, I shall not write a preface to the Book, or, not a lengthy one; it would be superfluous. The book is what the title gives leave to think it is; perhaps the title is a little cheap, but, anyhow, I hope it seems to imply that somebody, somewhere, misunderstands something about America. If that implication is gathered, the title is more or less justified. Of course, it is true, the book is just a bunch of critical ideas: on Walt Whitman, on Comedy, on the real nature of the old Frontier; on Lincoln and Washington's education; on the Good Life; and what on earth that is; on the uncomfortable rarity of contentment in our prosperous country. But all these miscellaneous considerations are more or less tied together by the fact that all of them treat of America, and

what America means; of our ideals, our way of life, and the little understanding that many estimable, educated men or women, especially when they are reformers or members of fashionable society, or immoderately Christian, or were born in Sicily,— Well, the point is,—

“Yes, sir,” said one of the properly impatient ones, “what is the point?”

“The point is,” I continued, “that this limited comprehension of American ideals was not in my mind when I started out,—you understand me,—I chanced to lecture; I wrote, casually; and what happened, was, that in each case, with each new subject in view, I found myself constrained to think about American ideals, history or traditions, or what not, which explained and accounted for”——

“Oh, perfectly, sir, perfectly,” said the Idealist, and added: “but, apart from the fact that your sentence cannot be parsed, I don’t see why it is necessary to be so terribly read up in history. This is a new world, sir, and it gets newer every day. We don’t need to know the past; what we need——”

Here vigorous dissent was expressed, and I took up the thread: “I agree with you that a new and glorious world, life, and national culture are beginning here, in our country; but, this new state of things that is coming on, this new and powerful spirit, as new, perhaps, as Christianity itself once was; all this, I say, derives from the Past, from a thousand years of it; and unless we know the source and spring from whence all this power comes, we shall make but a poor guess at where it means to go.”

A lively difference of opinion manifested itself at once; personalities were freely exchanged, and the discussion

was about to drift on the rocks, when the law student pressed me with a "Go on, sir," and I went on: "The meaning of the Present is hard to decipher. We are too close to it. The tumult and distraction of it are too near, too great. What are the American ideals of today? What do American people really care about?"——

"But is there an American people?" It was the youthful Idealist who spoke. "We have tens of millions of foreign-born citizens; we have Poles, Jews, Italians and all the others. The American people is a myth. When you say the American people, whom do you mean?"

"I mean," I replied, "the people who, hitherto, have constituted and governed the country. I mean the Anglo-Saxon, whose ancestors, very possibly, came from Denmark, Norway, Frisia, or the Netherlands; or from France, because they were Huguenots; I dare even mean the Anglo-Saxons, who, coming from England and Scotland, have given to this country its language and law, its religious ideals, its morals, its hopes and its institutions. In short, I mean ourselves."

On this a discussion broke loose on all sides, and, as usual, there were further lively differences of opinion. Presently, however, I was urged to state my opinions fully and, if possible, logically. So I took myself in hand: "For the purposes of this book America need not be considered as a race. Races are, possibly, dubious entities. I don't for a moment doubt their plasticity. Though I can imagine there may be limits to this plasticity. When it comes to the millions of foreign-born within our confines, some of these I like; others I don't. How could it be otherwise? The tribes of men differ. But whether we think that this, that, or the other race, as the Hottentot, the Australian, the Bushman, or the

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Swede, will ruin or build up our civilization; whether we welcome or wish to exclude them, certainly these peoples are not Americans. They may intend to become so. Their children will become so; or may, in two, more likely after three, generations. In the meantime, and now, the Culture of this country is Anglo-Saxon. There are many Mexicans within our borders. Do we accept their way of thinking, feeling and doing? They may be better people than we are. But we like our own way. This book is a simple study of *our way*. And, in this sense: What are the things Americans care about, and which they are resolved to retain and keep? Do we ourselves know what these things are? In short, do we understand ourselves; and, if we wish to, is it not true that the present is always best studied in the past?"

"Decidedly not," sprang from the lips of the Idealist.

"Hear, hear!" said a young athlete and soldier, returned from England, and turning to me, added: "What I want to know is, *who* is it who does not understand?"

"It might be well for you," I said, "that you should fortify yourself with another glass of port, or even a cup of tea; because, I have a shameless confession to make. It is in answer to your question, 'who is it that does not understand America?' My impression from these afternoons of ours, when you young men gratify me with your company, when we all converse together, and when sometimes I have been a silent listener:—for which silence, indeed, you have more than once reproached me,—my strong impression from all these, our talks together, is that only those of you who served in the war, in the least understand America. The war was an Education. I have yet to meet an American who served in France, who did not return, ten times, fifty times more

mature in mind and character than when he sailed. You are all alike in that, you who served;—and yet, even so, I have been amazed at your ignorance of American history, and above all at your little enthusiasm for it; for men, for events; for the Civil War, Grant, Lee, Jackson; for Meade, a man of your own town; your little interest in Washington, Lincoln, the Bill of Rights; the Virginia Convention. You are like a certain pretty girl with whom I lately talked. She knew the kings of France in their order; she knew every charming *liaison* formed; she knew men and women; the events of French history;—knew Port Royal, Maintenon, Le Petit Prince, Rouget de l'Isle, Candide, Bel-ami, Rémusat and who it was that invented the phrase 'l'esprit de l'escalier'.—These things she knew about; but, who was Andrew Jackson? She had supposed his name was Stonewall. What was the Revolution really and truly about? And did Patrick Henry kill Aaron Burr, or was it 'the other way round'?"

There was, here, a good deal of commotion and some disbelief was politely expressed, but I was presently under weigh again.

"Candidly, your ignorance of America has horrified me, and, has, I may say, constrained me to write this book. It is your book; your fault. You may remember that one or more of you, even, told me I ought to write such a book; it was my duty. And, if I understood you in the matter, you meant, by these words, that having arrived at maturity, and cherishing certain beliefs,—holding strongly to certain ideals,—I should express these so that not only you, here, who know what I think and feel, should have something of all this in print, but that other young men should be able to come at it,—

their possible disagreement—with my principles and sentiments not being in point. Thus encouraged, and I may say egged on by you, the thing is done. Though, I must fear, having myself no official connection with a university or other establishment of learning, that what I have written, and bundled together within these covers, may fail to reach the youthful public which you had in view. Moreover, I am afraid, I confess, that even if it does fall into the hands of youthful Americans, many of them may think it an arrogant assumption on my part that I understand our common country better than they do. In this case I shall plead, as lawyers do, in confession and avoidance. My *confession* is that there are those amongst you, who have acknowledged, or, rather, they announced that though graduates of Yale, Harvard, or Princeton, they yet knew little of American history; cared less; and that my warm interest, my enthusiasm amazed them. Once more, then, I hold you responsible for the book, and take much pleasure in placing the burden on your shoulders.

“And now, at this last, before you drink your stirrup-cups, before you all break up and leave me for your several homes, let me hope that, such as it is, the book may meet with your approbation, as in some sort reflecting the American spirit; and, as, possibly, leading on to a fuller understanding of that spirit, and to what that spirit demands of us. Indeed, if what I here say does nothing more than merely arouse you to a discussion of the questions involved, I shall feel well repaid. For, from such free and warm discussion of great matters, as we have so often had here, the greatest and best things come.

“Having thus implicated you in the matter of these

scattered and, no doubt, none too logical or profound ideas of mine to you, let me, at last, hope that you may not find the book laborious reading. You have often agreed with me that heaviness does not, necessarily imply profundity; and that solemn verbiage frequently conceals a vast vacuity of thought. Finally, let me hope, too, that the book may remind you, and not disagreeably, of these Fridays when we have met and discussed every conceivable subject; when sometimes we have argued, and again, reverting to a more civilized form of the communication of a difference in ideas, have readopted the mode of Discussion; and, thus, losing our heat, have possibly approached a little nearer to that serene person, Truth; who, I take it, does not give herself very readily to those who approach her blindly, or in a heat of passion, or, with a desire to triumph over her, and make her their own, by a display of logic, or with the glitter of paradox."

WHAT EUROPE THINKS OF US

THE human mind is disinclined to reflection, and acutely so, when the object of reflection is of no personal concern. But the war forced this unwelcome effort upon us: the war, with what followed it. There was a great and tumultuous torrent of events; slaughter on the grand scale; kings hurrying hence and away, thrones tumbling, nations falling, civilizations blowing up; revolutions, so hopeful, charming and wished for at the first; the desirability of them decreasing somewhat in the process of their carrying out; there was Trotzky, the Treaty of Versailles, and, finally, Taxes. All this with much more, has caused the least reflective among men to wonder, and put certain questions to himself.

Amongst the myriad other problems which the war has seemed to present to us for a solution is this: of whether nations and peoples can ever understand one the other. Putting this as a question to the Mentor within, to the indolent and irreflective mind, with which the most of us are endowed, this oracle, since it is Western, Pacifist and easily hopeful of progress, will very likely answer: "Why should they not understand one another, these nations and peoples? Are not all men equal and alike? Is not education widespread, and democratic Good Will the order of the day? Travel, Cook's Tours, personally conducted, our unbought Press, Politicians, International Finance, Wireless, and a thousand other new and glorious agencies of good contribute

to the drawing together of all nations and peoples in a common appreciation and perfect comprehension, the one of the other. There is no earthly reason why Frenchmen should not understand us; or why any American man or woman should fail of a perfect comprehension of the ideals, the morals, and manners of the Latin Quarter; or of the Chinese Mandarin, the Kurd, the Kaffyr, or the Communist."— But, does such a facile optimism really afford a solution of the problem? This entering into the soul or mind of another people must, first of all, depend upon our understanding of ourselves; and, how much understanding have nations of themselves? How much have we? And in what class does this comprehension of our ideals reside? What body of people has it least? Can it be taught? If so, how, and if not, shall we not suffer from this ignorance? Will confusion and discord not increase upon us, until, as the Germans seem to do, we live and toil in an everlasting social and civil dissension: no unity of purpose, no single-hearted enthusiasm, no one direction taken and held to; as it were, a ship which sails north by night and south by day, according as first one body of sailors and then the other, seizes the tiller and sets the course? Not that we are, now, as a nation in this unhappy state. But many forces are acting upon us, which may, in time, bring it about that we shall lose our *ideal unity*. This was lost during the thirty years preceding the Civil War; and, as I say, the signs of the times are that a like thing may, in the future, happen to us. For taking our population as it is, foreign-born and native included, it is plain enough that we have ceased to cherish the same religious, moral and political ideals, and this opens the way to endless broils and dissension. It must be recalled that a people only

flourishes when there is a certain general agreement on *fundamental questions*. When this is lost, unity and concord are gone. Civil war may not set in; there may be no violence; but the people will be weakened as a productive agent; it will feel dissentious and embittered, and will work and live in an everlasting flux of opinion and chaos of disagreement.— A people is, in this, like the individual man: it loses all if it loses its ideal unity. But where do we come on this unanimity of moral attitude; wherein do we perceive it?— Nothing so difficult as to penetrate the mind, to see into the character; to understand—feelingly understand—the Culture of a great People. For this is asking: ‘What do they most value, and mean either to retain, or possess themselves of it? And what are their gifts and capabilities?’

The answer to such a question, if at all to the point, would reveal the ‘fundamentals’ of an individual’s character, and equally so, of a tribe or nation. The main-traveled road to such knowledge is, of course, the history and literature of the community in question.

This, I repeat, is the natural and direct approach to the matter. But, let me, for the moment, deviate from this grandiose highway of the Historian and Critic. Let us see how much other countries understand us:—for, this inquiry must shed some light on the American, as well as illuminate the general subject.

Men when they censure or criticize other men or other nations than their own, display their own character. The Song of Hate, though not written by a man of Germanic race, is an example of what I mean. All peoples indulge themselves in these natural outbursts of animosity. Yet the mind staggers not a little at the fear, baseness, and

ignorance implied in them,—at the hopelessness of it all. And well it may, for these things are desperately incorrigible. But, confronted with things not subject to amendment; with occurrences over which we exercise no iota of power, the mind generates another mood. A certain levity, a wise levity invades us. So, a man will as often as not, smile when he witnesses a landslide, or the hopeless loss of a ten dollar bill. Nothing can be done about it, and our spirits sparkle forth as did those of King David after the death of his son had been certified to him. Aside from baseness and fear, the ignorance of which I spoke, is, I am fully aware, a serious matter; but it has its diverting side and especially so when taken in the humble and concrete instance.

See, then, how much stands in the way of a foreigner who would at all know these States. Language, first of all, and what an insurmountable obstacle language is! Not only a wall through which we cannot see, but at times, a trap for the unwary.

Only the other day, arriving in Innsbruck, and going to that excellent hotel, "The Tirolerhof," I observed on the wall an oblong placard, on which was printed the customary notice to travelers. It was in parallel columns of German, French and English. You were to deposit your jewels and so forth, with the proper persons. And further, the placard read as follows:

"Adhesion for stolen objects from rooms by closed doors cannot be accepted but with the legal maximum amount. Safes are disponible free of clients.— It is not allowed to make use of electric apparatus as smothering, etc. in the rooms.— No allowance by Police to bring dogs in our dining rooms.— Taxes for dogs two shillings a day foot included."

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And, further, how various customs are, and at times, how disconcerting! The Germans have, now, a Cult of Nakedness. You are walking through the dark German woods, perhaps in company with a young, unmarried, Italian woman, when, suddenly, a dozen people: old and very fat men, and maidens, with young men, and women of advanced years, appear in loin cloths and pass politely the time of day with you. Thus if they are *Bourgeois*, but if *Communists* they have no loin-cloth and their greetings are given in those words which are known, but not used, save by boys in speaking informally amongst themselves. Manners, too, are a bar to approach, and the difference in them frequently arouses ill-feeling. The American on the street meeting and about to pass another person on his left, habitually thrusts his left shoulder forward; a habit against which the whole European continent protests; and very sensibly, as being boorish and likely to provoke an awkward collision. Again, the Frenchman is irritated when he sees the bags and portmanteaus of our people pasted over with the depreciated paper currency of his Government. When the Englishman is sarcastic, and he is generally so, the American is ready to knock his head off.

Proceeding to graver matters, there is that one of misinformation.

Walking slowly back and forth on the parade, in the quaint and pretty town of Wildbad, in the Black Forest, in company with a most interesting man, former Prussian officer, and highly educated, we spoke of Henry Ford and he, admiring Mr. Ford heartily, presently said to me, "Of course Ford is a Jew, is he not?"

In the train, on the way to a German city, now some years ago, I overheard two of the Reds speaking of a

Communist meeting to be held in secret, and made up my mind to attend it. I was, of course, refused entrance at the door, but, arguing and insisting that I was an American, I was at last admitted. The Red speaker saying to me, "Yes, we will let you in because you are an American. All Americans are, of course, revolutionists; your country was founded on a revolution. Your great Abe Lincoln was a man of the Slums. And were he alive today, he would be a Red, and with us."

When it comes to misinformation where shall we end? In the spring of 1913 I frequently breakfasted in the Hofgarten, in Munich. There are few more agreeable places. The flower-beds were, in those days, beautifully kept. The coffee was good and it was no end of an idle and dreamy pleasure to sit under the horse-chestnuts in bloom, enjoying the sunshine, as one does in North Europe, where the sun comes out seldom, and everybody wishes to bask in his rare beams. On a May morning, I chanced to drink coffee there in company with a half dozen officers. We talked about England, America, the next war, and so forth. My young officers were courteous and agreeable, but the opinion they held of America was low. Our countrymen, they informed me, had never fought, or not well, or not long! Certainly not with scientific weapons; and they would not fight in case war came;—they would not, because our people were dollar-chasers, money-mad, material-minded, incapable of an ideal; much more incapable of offering their lives for an ideal. Besides, we were composed of forty races and many of these were inferior peoples; cowardly, like the Armenians, or incapable like the Poles. This congeries of peoples would certainly not shine in war. Further, the German population in Amer-

ica, if, by any chance, we sided against Germany, would make a revolution, throwing the country and its industries into such a state of dislocation, that we should be obliged to call the war off. And, again, in conclusion, we were not a fighting people, we were not prepared to suffer for an ideal end.

It seems a long time ago that I listened to the words of those gallant, educated, charming young men, who went, the most of them, to their deaths in France, in the Ardennes, in Belgium, believing in the justice of their cause, filled with the love of country; and no doubt but they died still believing, what they had said to be true. Who had so misinformed them?

Apparently, misinforming the public, keeping it thoroughly drenched in lies, is a necessary art, if sons of that public are to fight somebody. The British, I regret to say, supplied us most ably, before our entrance into the war, and during the war, with invented facts; with all sorts of imagined and exquisite stories, with fictions which have now come home to roost. "We wish you would think a little less well, a little less romantically, of the French," said an English friend and former officer. I replied, "It is your own doing. You put that bait on your hook, that bait about the kindly, chivalrous, gentle, gay, pure, noble and so forth, French character: we rose to it, took it in, hook, line and sinker, and joined the allies. I am glad we did join you—heartily glad. But, I do not think you have a leg to stand on, if now, we continue to think the French something which, in a measure they are not."

But, again, if you want men to fight, and pay taxes, you must misinform them, and it must be done lavishly, grossly, continuously.

The press is there, men say, for that purpose. The need is imperative. As for truth, the real facts . . . let us be honest, at least with ourselves, and admit that these must be smoked over, done away with, when the end to be obtained justifies such action.

So, when the Confederate army retreated from Gettysburg, both then and on other occasions, the Northern papers described at length the agonies of the Northern soldier, the soldier of Meade's army, after the poor fellow had quenched his thirst at one of the thousand springs or wells which General Robert E. Lee had had poisoned. Of such they said was Southern chivalry! Such Robert E. Lee! Moreover, these soldiers were *seen* dying. The wells were chemically tested; poison was found—What an art Fiction is!

Men are seldom averse to lying for a great and public end. It is not their lie. It is the lie of the Cause. But, aside from manufactured falsehoods, there is always the difficulty of comprehending foreigners. And how subtle this difficulty is! The German Radicals of the Republic today understand us as little as the officers I once talked with. I have yet to meet a German who, if you ask him why, in his opinion, America entered the war, will not tell you, we entered it in order to recover the ten billion dollars we had lent to the nations of the Greater Entente; and, that but for the ten billions, we should not have declared war.

Not only the Germans think this. Most Frenchmen and Italians say the same thing. There are certain few Frenchmen of education who know the regard in which we hold France; the cherished memory of Lafayette; our gratitude for the assistance that France of the Monarchy brought to us during the Revolution. These

Frenchmen are aware that there was a generous, chivalrous sentiment amongst our people during the years before we took sides in the great matter. But the Frenchman of the street, and the small shop, believes our motive for coming into the fray was this same ten billions. My Italian acquaintances were politely amazed when I denied this.

Men in Europe are not in the habit of ascribing generous motives to a People. Their own government excepted, and frequently not that, the other governing bodies, and the peoples themselves go to war, or keep out of war, do what they do, or leave undone what they leave undone, from no good motives. Greed, the love of power, vanity, or folly and madness move nations and decide the events of history. So they think and say. In this regard the cynicism of the French is absolute.

One more example of this blank vacancy of historical knowledge. On an evening of two years ago, an Italian gentleman, a singularly agreeable person and well read in the European literatures and in science, sat with me over our coffee, in the garden of our hotel, at Sorrento. We discussed the affairs of the world, dwelling a good deal on the darker side; the obstinate iniquity of man, his greed, his inclination to violence, his inability to raise himself by his own boot-straps, and yet his recurrent passion for this especial sort of uplift. It was a good time to be cynical and hopeless. For we sat under blossoming trees, in the neighborhood of brightly-colored gowns; chocolate and coffee on the clean table; the waiter attentive but without obsequiousness; and, in the distance, seen over great stone jars filled with red flowers, the blue gulf of the Bay of Naples; dulled or brightened in this or that space of its calm immensity

by the falling and passing of light breezes. Here and there a yellow sail, Neapolitan in cut. And far away on the sea-horizon, Capri, swimming in the misty light of the Italian sunset. So situated a man can afford to be cynical, and hard on his brother. We spoke of the revolution in Russia; of communism; of the industrials in north Italy; and, of course, we spoke of Mussolini, and of the fact, which seems authentic, that the communists, these same Red industrial workers, were on the eve of starting their own revolution, when the Fascists, knowing of this beforehand, took the lead and marched on Rome. We spoke of Fascism in power; and, would it govern wisely; would it build and construct a new form of state? My companion thought not. The Catholic Church and the Jews were adverse to Fascism. Besides which nothing succeeds; or if it succeeds, nothing endures; or if it endures, it is bad, or goes bad. Possibly we were a little like those children in Heine's poem who crawl under the hen-coop and play the game of being grown-ups on a visit, the one to the other; and who, imitating with art and truth the sad disillusioned tone of their elders, discuss the times, sorrowing over the degeneration of things in general; especially that Faith, Love and Loyalty are so little in fashion; and then too, 'the terrible dearness of coffee, and the difficulty of coming by any money at all!'

This Italian gentleman, continuing his talk, with his eyes fixed on Capri, said to me,—we had already branched off to a discussion of the United States and their people,—“but your people,” he said and very politely, “your citizens are not a *people*. Your population is mongrel. No one race has created your government, and culture. Moreover, your government is a product

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of pure theory. It must be so, for you have no history and no traditions.—I suppose your Mr. Roosevelt was the best product of your gross mongrelism. I am not informed upon his ancestry. But I understand he was a product of the mixture of races. And, by the way, I am told your people are becoming negroid in type.”

It is good to impart information. But to extract masses of misinformation: to put your hand, as it were, into a man's mind, dig out and reft rudely away from him all his most valued nuggets of ignorance, this is not an agreeable task;—at least, not while drinking coffee with Capri in view. Here was an educated man, a man of affairs, versed in science, highly intelligent. If a man of this measure can imagine such wildness, what about the ordinary, uneducated man, who sells figs, pigs, cravats; or, pushes a piece of machinery up and down and sideways once so often in the hour? Or what about the peasant who labors his vineyard? The fact is, outside of England, no one understands America or knows anything about it that is worth knowing. If they know anything, it is always something which is not so. Their state is one of staggering misinformation. Even in England misconception is frequent. And one is always surprised by the fact that those Englishmen who least understand us, who, indeed, seem incapable of doing so, are the Radicals; or, at least, members of the lower middle class; or industrial workers. Lord Balfour, Lord Grey, the British Ambassador, may not like or admire us. But they perceive how it is with us, and that easily. But Mr. Wells, Mr. Henderson, or the socialist M. P.'s—never!

How, then, shall we do away with, or diminish this ignorance? For, of course, it is prolific of misunder-

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standing and hatred. But, how shall we?—Should we set about it in our usual competent way, by the formation of a society and the organization of committees, we must keep in mind that the average American citizen imagines he is not ignorant of Europe, thinks he knows and understands the French, for example;—but, again does he? And can he inform them, as touching America, if he does not?

HOW KNOW A NATION?

W E Americans do not any more truly conceive of Europe than the Europeans do of us. But, putting aside this general and mass misunderstanding of Europe as something inevitable, by what means, in what way, shall the individual student or scholar know a foreign country?

The problem, thus stated, never, I must confess, presented itself to my mind until a day in the summer of 1913. The Tempest that was to gather and burst on Europe with such lightning speed, and such deluge of ruin and death, was then below the horizon of time;—war, to be sure, was spoken of; no doubt it might come; and come any day; but there was hope, too, that it might be staved off. There was probably time to make an appeal to the men of good will, in all, or certainly as between two of the nations. There was a movement of this sort in Germany. It was an organized society with the avowed object of bringing about a better state of feeling between England and the German Empire. Or, to come nearer to what was intended: the educated, professional men of the two nations were to meet, talk things over, and reach, if it might be, an understanding amongst themselves. Manufacturers, business and tradesmen might wish for war; International High Finance move secretly to bring it on. But their efforts would be in vain. Many college professors in Germany adhered to this project; nor only men of this learned sort; for a

large number of minor officers, coming from aristocratic families belonged to the society, they being strongly of the opinion that, owing to their kinship, England and Germany should and could form an alliance; or should, at all events, not destroy each other. The former Kaiser's sister, Augusta Victoria, interested herself keenly in the project.

The man from whom first I learned about this movement was a professor of the northern languages and their literatures in the university of Munich. He was then in his thirties; blonde, bearded, a great walker, a lover of nature, as unfortunately only Englishmen and Germans are; free in his talk, oncoming, observant, and of course learned. I may say that to a man of defective education, to one whose education was not thorough, not built as a house is, on well-laid foundations, to such an unfortunate American the man's learning, and not only so, but his actual mind, the thinking part of him, seemed a prodigy. On the occasion I refer to, we were walking on the hills and bluffs above the Isar, the way lying first through meadows, and then for many miles through the well known and well-tended forest of beech and pine. We started our walk at the station of Höllriegelgreuth-Grünwald, where I would advise all others to start out, if they can remember the name;—and our walk was from that point to Hohenschäftlarn, where there is an impressive Catholic Church and school in the dignified and important Baroque style; where the meadows open out; and, let me add, where the beer cannot be complained of.

As we walked through the meadows, the flowers red, white and blue in the grass, our eyes fixed from time to time on the range of snow-covered Alps in the distance,

we spoke at some length of this project for the increase of good will between Germany and England. And we touched on just that one seemingly insurmountable difficulty of any understanding by any man of a civilization foreign to his own.

Presently, the young professor put me a question. He prepared for it by telling me he had traveled in England. One saw little when one traveled. He had read English literature; yes, but of that, too, what should one say?—We agreed that much of literature, much of what is well known, the classics of a race, are the product of a special character; or if not so, they lead to no understanding of the people and their ideals.—And so, continuing on this way of thought, he said to me, somewhat as follows:

“Now, what would you advise? What single book would you advise me to read in order that I may perceive those things which have made the greatness of England; the discipline, or ideal or moral aims which have helped her build her Empire;—in short, tell me a book which will convey to my mind the *best* of England,—the living fountain and source of her power, her civilization?”

The question gave me pause. Or, perhaps, I was getting too thirsty to think. And there was in the remote distance that snow-whitened, serrated, lofty range of the Alps, filling the mind with a sense of infinite power and purity, as of something faithful and eternal, but, yet hung in air;—remote and never to be approached. Snow mountains distract the mind much as if you beheld the council of the gods on Olympus. At all events, I could recall no such book. However, a few weeks later the name of the book he should read leaped to my mind,

and I at once wrote him of it, at the same time warning him that the book, a novel, had once been overwhelmingly popular, and was now virtually unread, even unknown. And, that any cultivated, modern Englishman or American, hearing the name of the authoress and the title of the novel, would smile indulgently, or more probably, laugh aloud at the notion that a book by this authoress could serve any purpose save to decorate a shelf in conjunction with *Enoch Arden*. That such a book in the least explained England, they would deny; and surely add, that I must be a mild, wild, aged and possibly weak-minded mid-Victorian. The novel I proposed to him was "The Pillars of the House," in five volumes, by Charlotte Yonge. Six months later he wrote me, I being then in America, that I was right about the book; it had given him, presented to him, just what he was in search of: a portrait or narrative account of that discipline, and those ideals, which are the source of the greatness of England and her Empire.

Speaking for myself, now, at this later date, I still feel assured that from this novel a reader would acquire an understanding of the upper middle class, and of how the men and women of that great and highly creative class were moulded, made and built up. Of the discipline they once received; of their ideals, their morals and temper. No one novel of Thackeray or Dickens, or Fielding, or Miss Austen; no single work in prose, or verse: neither *Don Juan*, nor the *Excursion*, nor *Paradise Lost*, nor *Hyperion*, nor the plays of Wycherley, nor *Pilgrim's Progress*, will give half as good a notion of what has made England the nation she is; of what has made her Empire possible. To be sure other books might and should be read to round out our knowledge, and com-

plete the portrait of the English character: Chaucer, *Henry the Fifth*, *Boswell's Johnson*, and, certainly, *Blackstone's Commentaries*.

Lest, however, some soul all too open to suggestion, should sally forth, purchase and try to read the five volumes of *The Pillars of the House*; and so doing, accuse me of madness, I hasten to say, with Paul, that I am not really mad, or only as mad as other literary men are. The faults of this authoress are patent. Miss Yonge's style, her *prose* is heavy and, at times, awkward. She wants idiom; she wants everything of ease, life and lightness; everything that, for example, Miss Edgeworth in her *Helen* possesses to such an astonishing degree. You cannot wander comfortably through her tale, nor does she catch you up and carry you off. She is not limpid. She is frequently opaque. In short, her prose is insufferable. Only one who has, himself, passed the day in plowing the soil, will know what I mean when I say, that reading this novel you must keep both hands on the plow-handles and not mind laboring along the sticky furrow. Moreover, in order to understand her, you must know much! These quotations, these allusions! To unknown writers, like Aristotle, or Isaiah, or St. Paul. Then her detestation of America, and her abysmal ignorance of it! And what shall one say of her morals? This weighing on high principles! And her everlasting, tedious Christianity; the downright and outspoken admiration she has for Virtue, for moral discipline, for duty! And, then, too, her appalling delicacy, her unnatural refinement!

It would be agreeable to enumerate her virtues as a novelist; her profound feeling for character; her sense of the importance, interest and excitement of family

life; and her amazing ability to convey all this:—not equalled as far as I am aware, by any author save Tolstoi in *War and Peace*;—but no, no! Best let her repose on the shelf with all the little Underwoods: that fascinating, high-bred, gifted, gay and desperately indigent family; progeny of the Man of God, the consumptive clergyman; thirteen in number, and more would have followed, but that both parents died. Let her remain unread, in the vast solitude of her late-Victorian Christian sentiment, and *let* she will be. She will, because the Taste of the Time governs in literature.—

I knew a man once whom the reading of the Lord's Prayer moved to shouts of most unseemly mirth;—and why not? The Lord's Prayer is not a prose composed in the style of the decade; and, to this gentleman, it sounded strangely like some parody, heard at a Comic Opera. It is to be observed that men do not readily take to a new dish. Savages never. And the disagreeable, flustering impression of novelty, the crash and onset of new ideas, the dynamic pressure of feelings never previously heard of, or come on, all this may be as readily encountered in Homer or Catullus, or in any other classic, as in the most recent and advanced works of impressionism. In this sense, Miss Charlotte Yonge is too novel, too unexpected, too freshly original, as the great classics I mention would be, for an age which likes and tolerates only its own especial sort of newness.

I have tried, thus, to say how I think the spirit of England may be approached; the spirit which has made her what she is. If we put the same question to ourselves in regard to France, only not demanding that this essence of what is Gallic shall be incarnate in one book; or, even, only in literature; what shall we answer? Hardly

shall we know France by living at the Ritz. Even living in Paris, here and about, as a foreigner must live, and that is on the surface, will not tell us much. What book will? Balzac? He will tell us monstrous little of *the best* in the French people. Hugo? Verlaine? Maupassant? Mallarmé?—We should get no further with these. I should advise beginning our studies in an earlier, and a more aristocratic period than that of the present. All the more so, as the *Bourgeoisie*, which is to say the class now in power, has, as yet, produced nothing very perfect; or, certainly not perfect in the French way. To come at the French character I should advise reading that little known work of St. Francis of Sales, entitled *The Devout Life*. The book is a series of letters of advice to a young lady of high family who desired to live the devout life, though remaining in the world. The great and saintly Bishop addresses her under the name of Philothea, that her real name may not appear to the public. The grace, the spiritual refinement of that book are, to my mind, the essence of all that is most Gallic. We might then read the sermons, and life of Fénelon; the plays of Corneille; the letters of Voltaire; almost any modern critical writer:—Emile Faguet, or Jules LeMaitre;—and, finally, we ought to take a course of lectures explanatory of the history, the meaning and modern aims of the Roman Church. We should, however, have, also, to enjoy the 18th Century French school of painting, Boucher, Fragonard, and the others;—if anything further, I suppose we should live for a year or so in the house of a French peasant, and another year in that of some member of the older Aristocracy.

I will not try the reader's patience by asking a like question about Germany. But, I am sure, that if we would know what is best in that people, the straightest

way to it, would be to enter a Lutheran Church of a Sunday morning and hear the congregation sing two or three of their choral-hymns or anthems: The German *Choräle*.

But, books are not all. Literature is a fragment. Often, as I have indicated it misrepresents the ideals of the nation. It may be as my friend said, the product, and frequently is, of some highly exceptional character. How much has this been the case in our own country! Certainly, there is no one book which expresses America in its best. We have expressed ourselves very partially in music, in sculpture, in painting; though happily more may be said for our architecture. Fortunately, there is a larger way of looking at the problem.

The essential character of a people appears and reappears throughout its secular history, not only in the arts and the written word, but, even more decisively, in the men of genius and character it produces; in the political structure or system, changing or stable, which it rears; and in the character of the well-being or ill-being of its daily life, in the street, and in the home, if home there be. And as the *ideal* is concerned, we have to think that no race can be known and understood without our knowing the religion it professes. The faithful practice of the precepts of that religion is not the vital matter. The vital matter is the ideal held out, whether in religion, politics, morals or in any other form of activity. There are, further, in the life of nations certain events which throw light on the national genius.

When it comes to men, it is sufficiently clear that Lincoln, Roosevelt, Whitman, Emerson, Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson, tell us much of the American character. And there are, too, others, men little known, forgotten characters, who reflect the spirit of the race and

its culture. Such a man was James Louis Pettigru. No doubt a hundred others could be cited.

"Representative men" is the phrase we use. What they *represent* is the heart and mind of the people from whom they spring, and who uphold, or, possibly, do not uphold their hands. Daniel Webster had a deal of America in him, and not to know his orations; not to have felt the power and greatness, that something of grandeur he had, is not to know that strain in our people. Moreover, a people which is gifted politically, constructs and organizes, working as an artist does, relating the parts, to the whole; and so, you have the Constitution of the United States, a highly artificial production and as much a work of art as the Parthenon.

The Constitution, we are now frequently told, was the fruit of endless bickering and infinite compromise. No doubt. But it represents the habit of mind and the character of the people who bickered and compromised; and who now living under it, like it, and make it work and do. It represents them in all they are, as much as the Cathedral of Chartres represents and suggests the greater France of that period.

Reverting to men of high character and original genius, the American mind and soul, and even our racial limitations are found in Washington and Lee. This kind of man is our natural fruit. We produce this. The likeness between them is unescapable. Not merely that both were tall, handsome, dignified and athletic men; or that both had a genius for war. The essential likeness consists rather, in this, that the moral values of the one were the moral values of the other. This makes them close kin. They seem both to have been cast in one mould. And why not? Both were Virginians; both Americans.

PREJUDICE AND PROPAGANDA

WE Americans have been, recently, much spoken of, in Paris. The French Press has censured our national conduct, and has, in some cases, described our national characteristics in no very flattering terms. Being humble men of heart, we seek to recognize ourselves, our portrait, in these stinging articles; but, with the best will in the world, we never succeed. The benefit we derive from these somewhat slashing accusatory articles is of another nature. In them, we perceive, or we may, how easy it is for the modern Press to make bad blood as between peoples. And, more importantly, we see plainly the part that prejudice and ignorance play when a man of one nation writes about the people of another. The folly of the performance is as great as the prejudgments are blind, and the ignorance vast. We are astonished, and dismayed.

But, let us take heart; for, we Americans, as soon as we begin to think and write of other nations, evince the same sort of prejudice, and make it plain that our absence of real knowledge is as great as that of those others. Now, ignorance is subject to enlightenment: but prejudice goes deep; is often immovable; and, the point of this exordium,—the study of it, in ourselves, is not only a pastime, like Mah-jong; but is, too, a thing necessary to be undertaken if we would know our own times and people. For, a man's prejudice is, as I have indicated, a part of his very soul. Deferring for a moment, any consideration of what we think of the French, American

opinion of the Armenian or of the Church of Rome, or of the east Prussian Aristocrat, throws a glare,—as it were, a violence of luminosity upon us:—upon the vast circle and concavity of our ignorance, and all the pre-conceptions that so darkly fill it. The Armenian is the most despised race on earth. The peoples of Asia: the Turk, the Kurd, the Arab, the Hindoo; or in Europe, the Englishman and the Frenchman, despise the Armenian as being the lowest, the most cowardly, the least reliable, and most flagrantly untruthful and cheating of those who dwell and move upon the face of the globe.

In America we think otherwise of the Armenian. He is a sort of favorite race.

“False and faithless.” Such is his portrait, in three words, by an Austrian officer, who in the war commanded a Turkish battery. Do we know better than these others? Perhaps we do;—or, perhaps, are we just ignorant, or even willful?

We are, certainly, ignorant of the Church of Rome, as a power for good. We feel that it is a political danger. We know, its hand is already deep in our politics; and, here, the profound good sense of the American citizen comes to the fore; he joins the Ku Klux Klan, or some other secret society; one of whose projects is to oppose and diminish the *political* activities of the Roman Church. Those who doubt that the Roman Church is a political power; always has been, and is, now, in the present and with us; those who doubt that it seeks temporal power and an absolute authority; are, of course, mere children, abiding in the ignorance of children. If any such desire to understand the Roman Church he need only make a short study of the history of that church in German politics. Putting the matter briefly,

the Catholics of the Roman Church in modern Germany, place the Papal See above their Fatherland. And it is notorious that that church will accept and accommodate itself to any state of affairs, to any revolution, or to any foreign conqueror: all in the interest of its own property, power and perpetuity. Whoever or whatever system wins, or seems likely to win:—Democracy, Monarchy, Bolshevism;—the Roman Power will agree to live with it on friendly terms. Provided only that the Church, its property, privileges, and so forth, be respected. But this is shameless? Certainly, it is shameless, from our standpoint: The standpoint of men who love their country. All this our people are now beginning to perceive clearly, and the perception makes them feel strongly. If I seem to understate the danger of the Roman Power, it is because I desire to do so. Our people is, perhaps, sufficiently alive to that danger. And if not, the recent troubles in Mexico will render it more so. But the beauty, grace and charm, the moral power, the human wisdom of the Roman Church, the infinitely rare, rich and voluminous mass of human and valuable experience, saintly and otherwise, of which that great and enduring organization is, as it were, the bearer, the viaduct, the hander-down to us of later generations:—of all this we are, I think, I may say, profoundly ignorant.

And so, as touching that fabulous being, the East Prussian Aristocrat, and former officer, we all know, and many words are not needed to express the detestation, loathing and horror in which that officer and the class he springs from, are held by the mass of our people. Certain of our former enemies, we frequently hear it said, in America, are, and in war showed themselves to be, a superior sort of German. "They" were kind,

brave fellows. They spoke the truth. We know this, for our sons who fought them told us so. But the Prussian was a ramrod, a martinet; at once refined and coarse; cowardly, cruel, bestial, silly, lustful and a hound to boot." Thus the press of that period, thus the 'Movies,' and thus many women today. An American officer who had fought the Prussians for a year, and with notable gallantry, said to me: "The Prussians are the best of the Germans. They are brave. Brave men are seldom cruel. I have no recollection of any cruel action having been taken, for which a Prussian officer was individually responsible."

The truth is that the Prussian Aristocrats, the *Junkers*, whatever their faults, are a ruling and governing race: a fighting race, austere, moral, capable; and, much the same thing can be said of the whole German aristocracy. These aristocrats may, or may not have wished the war; but, once begun, they were the moral backbone of the conflict. It lasted as long as it did last because they were there.

But to continue with the dreadful truth: the Prussians are like us and like the English. They resemble us outwardly, and far more do they resemble us in their sentiment of honor, their feeling for duty; their love of country; and in their willingness to fight; as also, in their powers of organization, and in the immense importance they attach to personal truth and loyalty. It must be understood that this portrait is of the Ideal of a Class. That all German aristocrats are loyal and truth-speaking is, of course, not the case. Neither are all Americans humorous and kind. The point is, and always must be: what are the ideals to which a people subscribes? If the characterization which I have given

of the Prussian *Junker* is at all true, it is plain that the man is a desperately dangerous fellow: dangerous as an opponent. This it is that has made him unpopular. He endangers too many things: International High Finance; the commercialization of all values; the direct power of the mob, America, France and so forth. He has, therefore, been the target for abuse. For we abuse only what we fear.

Some persons, I know, will feel that this is all very shocking. It is a great hardship to have to change a settled opinion. And certain very powerful forces settled men's opinions for them during the great war; and, of course, not only as regards the German aristocrat. Most Americans were ready to believe any story brought out against that unspeakable villain. But, much more had to be done: everything German had to be traduced and brought into contempt; German science, art, poetry, music:—it was all third rate, or anyhow it was depraved; and, above all, the Germans were a cruel people, and were solely responsible for the war. But many men and women of weak mind, or naif and trusting character having been so deeply deluded during the war, I can well imagine that coming by chance on this characterization of the Prussian, they will defend their position perhaps much as follows: "Of course, we have heard of Mr. Barnes' book. It may be that he is right; that Germany did not begin the war, and is no more guilty of the war than were all the other nations. About a thing of that sort, a matter of fact, we can revise our idea. But not about the Prussian *character*. What you say cannot be so. It is too new to be true. We never heard it before, and what a man has not previously heard is not and cannot be the truth. For, listen: we were told otherwise during

the war. The Press, posters, books, printed books, gave us another impression of those brutal Prussians:—And now you come, with this brand-new paradoxical conception. It is too late. We have seen the Prussian *Junker* on the screen, in situations which, really, will not bear repeating:—the man wore a monocle and was a brutal and revolting beast. We have no doubt that most Germans and all Aristocrats are more or less of his stripe. We do not believe a word of what you say.”

Yet another class may simply say, “As this is past and long ago, why mention it? What good does it do?”

Nothing is so important to the successful conduct of affairs in a democracy as that the people shall not have their facts falsified. If you can inculcate ignorance into a people; if you can tell them what is not so, and make them believe it, you have that people well in hand. When it comes to action, they will go your way. Aware of this, certain of the powers that be, waste no time and lose no opportunity. What they did, during the War, they do now during the Peace. The Prussian monster was then the target of their abuse. Today they gnash their teeth against Mussolini; or cast a slur on Parliamentary government. The same forces are operative and for the same reasons. And, as previously so now, the ready tools of these forces:—the hack writer, robed and hooded in anonymity; the clergyman, innocent of the knowledge of political principles, and all those gentle and neurasthenic young men, who, with their eyes fixed on a revolution, still in the distance, imagine themselves as the Lords of Chaos, competent to control the tornado of the violence of men,—all these gather themselves together, and scattering the flowers of their praise at the feet of the new Russian Oligarchy, they dance a dream

about that resuscitated corpse: the principle of government at the hands of a class.

It may be, and generally is thought, that everything in a Democracy is open, candid, visible or knowable. What *forces* are, then, these that I speak of? Or, is there, really, one and a secret Power or Interest which moulds public opinion to suit its own ends? Such a power, it will be held, is unthinkable. It cannot exist.

Perhaps it cannot. But I recall, or seem to, the words of a sage, a certain Arab, a merchant of Bagdad; a man at once wealthy and wise. He had, in his youth, been a great Traveler, and having heard many and strange tales, he could deliver these, word for word, in the form they were given. It was long ago, but I still see the man, bearded, in his burnous; the bazaar, crowded and noisy about us, as he leaned towards me with piercing eyes, and in his soft voice delivered himself in the manner of the Orient:

* * * *

"There is in Seistan, in Asia, a wind which blows unceasingly, but whence it comes, in what desert, or from the plain of what ocean it arises no man knows; or if any know, they will not say. Without diminution of celerity, without cessation, without changing its course, forever and ever, by day and night, by night and day, this mighty and invisible force rushes on and on;—not, as it were, in waves, or surges,—but as a continuous tide or torrent of the uncontrollable air. It blows at an inconceivable height, and on the bosom of this wind, on the dry and cold bosom of it, there is conveyed an infinite mass, a world of the desert and flying sand. The grains of this sand are not visible from below, save in this, that, hanging in the wind, they turn the noonday

sky to the colour of brass. The grains, as I say, are invisible; for, once the Simoon has sucked them aloft, they are sustained and upheld by the stable fury of the air. Only when the region of Seistan is reached, does the blast above mitigate and allow these grains to descend that they may fulfil their destiny and accomplish their task. Grain by grain, as they fall, the wind below, subservient to that above, seizes and deposits them. A few, and then many, and thereafter a volume is flung downward and violently sown by this everlasting, this cold, and immitigable blast of the desert of the air of Seistan. And thus,—for, as I say, this wind blows without ceasing,—the cold and brittle seeds of the sand, drifting and dancing beneath the secret and silent wind, increase upon themselves, until, at last, the blind and speeding army of them marches, mounds over, covers and conceals all things: all bushes, all trees, all flowers and forests. It beleaguers and rises quietly, yet rapidly, above all the towns and cities of men: yea, over all the temples and towers of these cities; and, higher still, for is it not secretly cast downward, and with skill and care dropped and well placed, grain by grain, at the bidding and by the force of powers we do not comprehend?— Thus, it is that the seven cities, those Seven Ancient and Mighty Cities of Seistan, are no more, for they are buried out of sight and mind. The Arab of the south will tell you that this is the work of the wind of Seistan, and that this wind blows still.”

* * * *

But, the meaning of this parable?— The power of International High Finance is as the power of a wind. It hides the truth with sand. The sand is the books, or articles, or essays, or editorials, or speeches or posters

which International High Finance causes to be written. This is the propaganda of High Finance. It operated during the war. Much sand was thrown in the eyes of the public. Many facts were buried. The public was led, was persuaded to believe those things which International High Finance desired it should believe.

Even when a people is not subject to misinformation it is not in the nature of things that it should understand another people. If nothing else, the divergence in ideals, the difference in culture, or the novelty of its moral code, confuses the mind and renders it incapable of further sympathy. But the kind and quality of the misunderstanding that one or another nation indulges in, this is worth the gravest consideration. It is not criminal not to know something. So I am informed by those who profess to know what Sin is, and to guide us away from the serpent creature. But these same professors of the knowledge, or Science of sin, these same Christian ministers, do not deny that ignorance may be dangerous. For, all error grows out of ignorance, as bubbles are formed around emptiness. And Nature, or if we prefer the word, God, does not in the very least condone error. Thus, in general, if a man be ignorant of the nature and working of bi-chloride of mercury, and swallows this poison, there is no pardon for him; no miracle will be wrought to save him. And, so it is, with regard to all error: even to the error of not understanding about another people. Our ignorance of their virtues and their character may be fatal to our own nation. It was fatal to the German Empire. But the nature, the quality and kind of error a people indulges itself in, is, as I say, a subject full of a singular instructiveness.

MISUNDERSTANDING EUROPE

TO a dweller in cities, and especially to one who is not precisely infatuated with human beings as they present themselves to the ear, eye, and nose on the sidewalk or in the trolley-cars of New York, nothing is more soothing than a visit to the Zoölogical Gardens. For the wild beasts and birds in their cages are all and each perfected and finished creatures. And, accordingly, we can regard them without pity or shame; and without that uneasy moral sensation, the desire to reform them. Golden eagles, monkeys, rattlesnakes, and panthers—there they are, irreclaimably wild, singularly inalterable; dignified, conscienceless, and complete. And more mysterious, a good deal, than our human kind. Their minds are more mysterious. We cannot penetrate or understand them. All we can do is to study the birds and beasts in their respective habits,—study what is now called their *behaviorism*. And this, we know, must be done with some care if we would remain whole. So when we pat the protruding paw of the lion, we do it not without caution. Sometimes the cautionary instinct is lacking. For example, to children and those who do not know by bitter experience, the opossum, curling up into himself, seems a harmless, half-hairless, ugly little thing and safely slow in his movement. And he is, or appears, this, as hunters will tell you, until in his deep way he concludes that the moment for action has come, when his dart and bite are of a lightning-like rapidity. But

once we know he will "play 'possum," will apparently go to sleep in order to delude us over-confident bipeds into a nearer approach, and will then inevitably "get us," well, we know, then, the main thing about his *behaviorism*. In the same way, investigating the turkey buzzard or the cobra, we quickly learn that their habits and ways are not ours. Speaking with pertinent absurdity, we do not really think they are Americans, much less do we imagine them to be Christians in their moral attitude.

But when it comes to the diverse races inhabiting Europe and who have got themselves caged off into separate nations, we Americans believe, reversely, that they are in no way at all different from ourselves. We regard them,—the most of us do,—as being in all respects like us, as being, that is, really Americans who, unfortunately, have to live in Europe. Of course their habits and customs differ from ours, and so do the varying civilizations they have created; and so, too, their arts and literature, their music, their religion. But we believe that, essentially and under their skins, they are just like us, or would be if they had the chance. There is certainly no mystery in their moral make-up; nothing secret, nothing to be learned, nothing that makes caution advisable. And we go yet further: we do not believe that ignorance of a people or race is possible.

There is, therefore, no reason to study the behaviorism of the dignified people who inhabit to the south of us; nor is there any mystery in the working of the French mind; and the moral system of the Chinese is a thing not worth a moment's consideration. For, it cannot differ from our own moral system. Any one who knows the American farmer or the man of the small town, knows that this is how he looks at the matter. Let me try to

indicate how much this mental attitude is a creed, an accepted way of thinking.

The year following the armistice, I met a young man returned from working for the Y. M. C. A. in Italy and the Near East. He was brimming over with a happy enthusiasm and love for the Italians. He was one of those touching Americans who combine vast good-will with vast ignorance. Wishing to measure this latter, or, at least, as it was both positive and extensive, to understand the grounds of it, I expressed myself freely upon the Italian people and asked him his opinion of my opinion. I cannot pretend to quote his exact words, but a good deal shocked by what I had said, he spoke much as follows:

"You don't know the Italians. They are a democratic people; they love liberty just as we do; and our *church*"—one of the evangelical communions—"over there is going to have them by the millions. If we like it, why wouldn't they?"

"Your thought that races are different from one another and that, therefore, we should seek to understand each race, in the light of its history, by studying its civilization; that's an old-fashioned idea, 'way back. Races are different on the surface, but the difference comes out in the wash. I tell you the Italians and the Turks and Syrians, where I was,— they're just like Americans. Why shouldn't they be? Aren't we all Christians? Aren't we all just folks? Don't we all have the same hearts under our vests?"

This conception of race is possibly derived, however falsely, from the early Christian belief that all men, quite apart from their distinctive minds, and characters, are possessed of souls; and that these souls are enduring, of like worth, and similar the one to the other. It can

certainly have no other foundation. It can hardly be derived from science, from ethnology. For though some men of science still believe in what is called "universal capacity,"—that is, that the Fuegian savage could, in propitious environment, produce a Fuegian Julius Cæsar or Shakspeare,—yet, on the whole, this notion is discredited. Certainly such a prejudgment upon well known or easily known facts cannot be derived from history or from common sense and experience. Yet the notion, antiquated and baseless as it is, has the support of educated men. "The New Republic," in one of its editorials of now some years ago, asserts that if the Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan really knew anything about biology, "he would be aware that the most competent authorities" incline toward the view that "such obvious discrepancies as appear between the average Alabama negro and the average inhabitant of Vermont are mainly due to environmental factors."

If I understand what the words "obvious discrepancies" seem to imply, the writer means that the negro of pure African blood is potentially as good a man as the white man, the socalled Anglo-Saxon of Vermont. That is, let the million or so of negroes in Alabama enjoy the same advantages as these Nordics of New England, and those negroes will produce as good fruit, as fine, as deep, and enduring a civilization and culture as the whites.

Much as I like the full-blooded black man, much as I admire him for what he is, which we are not, I incline to doubt the doctrine. But let us for the moment accept this assertion of racial equality as one "toward which the most competent authorities incline." Even so, I do not understand the writer to mean that the negro would or could produce the *same* civilization, the same culture,

the same sort of great man, as the Anglo-Saxon of New England. For example, it seems on the face of it unlikely that the Alabama negroes, would, somehow or other, produce among them, a dark Jonathan Edwards or a Daniel Webster or John Adams. Mr. Coolidge, too, with his astringent humor, his laconicism, and his dryness, seems hardly African in quality. I take it, therefore the writer means that what the black man would bring forth, the civilization he would erect, would be as good as that we possess, or possibly better, but, in any case, of another kind and quality.

If the writer in "The New Republic" should find himself in agreement with this interpretation of his conception of race, still he would not be in any agreement with my young enthusiast of the Y. M. C. A. For the latter held the negro, and all other races, to be the same, potentially, as ourselves. Whereas, the writer in "The New Republic," if I at all catch his drift, holds that the negro in given circumstances could and would do as well as we have, but another sort of well.

Let us, again, for the moment, suppose this view of the matter to be the true one. We can and must, then, say that just as a man,—any man,—has character, so a race has, and that this character or quality which differentiates it from all other races is the really important thing about it. For it is plain that what we most value in a given man is the specific, individual quality, his singularity of being; what he can do and be, which no other living soul can be so harmoniously and completely or do so successfully.

Mr. Edison invents, Senator Borah legislates, Mr. Griffith creates for us the epic of the eye, Miss Cather writes her sad story of a lost soul, Mr. William H. Ander-

son, or another, directs what fluids we shall not drink; and so, in a way, we get on. But the abilities of these ladies and gentlemen are not likely to be interchangeable. For say what you like, men create in their own image; that is, what they do or make is done after an inward pattern. And so with races. The Spartans and Athenians produced cultures that varied by a good deal the one from the other. And so the French and the Chinese. In short, the nations of the earth are not a row of buckets painted in varying colors, and each one filled with water, and all the water just water. Rather, a race is the product of such a mold as a sculptor makes; into which he pours his molten bronze, and the bronze, taking of necessity the form within, comes out a statue according to intention. The statue formed in some other mold would be a different statue. Thus the value of each given race consists in its difference from all other races, and this difference results in varieties of civilization. Now, if we desire, as we all must desire in a world quite uniform and dull enough, the value of variety, the exhilaration that comes from it, the strength, splendor, and joy of it,—well, we can have this variety on no other terms. And so much is this so, that where two races of highly divergent character mingle, the mold of each one seems to be broken in the process, and you get nothing more of the same value, quality, and worth from either. Both races are apparently ruined. That this holds true of dogs and horses every breeder of them knows, and accordingly he breeds with care according to a body of ascertained knowledge, and with an end in view.

There would seem to be nothing unchristian about such a view. To the most orthodox Fundamentalist, to Bishop Manning himself, it could be said, Why did God in thou-

sands of years, and with infinite care, create the unique, man-producing mold we call a race? Surely not in order that the mold should be regardlessly broken. If the mold we call the Hebrew Race can turn out men of a certain Hebraic beauty of countenance not elsewhere to be seen, with gifts not elsewhere to be found, shall we be wise to insist that the Hebrew intermarry with the Bushman of Australia? Should we not rather say, Keep your beautiful mold intact, and produce for the world what the world will and must relish and value, produce, that is, your Paul of Tarsus, your Ben Halévi, your Heine, your Spinoza, your Disraeli, men not in any way like their contemporaries among the races within whose borders they lived, but differing from them, and differing in a way that was of worth to the world, benefited the world.

Certainly the prophets of Israel were of this opinion, and they made their opinions known in their well known trenchant manner. The Jews were forbidden to marry with the alien.

Thus, when the prophet Ezra, a patriot and a man of rather strong feeling,—when he heard that the Jews were intermarrying with unprincipled Perizzites and others, who had no regard whatever for Jehovah,—that is, once more, for those things which the great men of Israel cared for,—when he heard this piece of news,—he said, “I rent my garments and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished.”

Well, I regard the Jewish race precisely as the prophet Ezra did; that is, as something special, singular, different, inimitable, and as such of great value to the world. In my way of thinking, the Jewish mold of man, is sacred; let it be preserved in order that the men it duly casts forth,

whether prophets like Ezra, or prophets like Spinoza, shall not cease to exist, and illuminate the world. And as I think of the Hebrew, even so do I think of all the races of men, especially and mainly so of those races which have already proved that they can create abundantly and greatly in their own image.

But the most of our countrymen think as my evangelical friend did, that races are alike, and men, too, for that matter. We think if one man possesses, or rather seems to possess, a unique gift, it is because he has had luck at the start; and that another man could do what he does, given the same environment and opportunities; and so with goodness, saintliness, holiness. There are, we say, no men who are, by a stroke of nature, endued with a goodness superior to that of the individual units who compose the mass. There are no saints; men, that is, of unique goodness, the masters of life. Men are equal. Environment is all. God cares nothing for human *quality*. He could create *quality* from the stones of the street. He could, and he frequently does, create a saint from a simpleton, a man of genius from an ignorant boor. Men are equal.

Having got so far, let us take the matter up in its political aspects.

Since some years now, we Americans are confronted with the necessity of finding and formulating a policy as toward Europe, and, indeed, toward Asia, and we are plainly unable to do this. We have no policy, and at present can have none save such as our commercial interests dictate. Any other policy would necessarily be based on the ideals of the foreign nation concerned. We should have to take into consideration the nature, history, po-

litical creed, habits, and desires of the race or nation to which our policy is to apply.

But we are of the opinion that there is nothing to be known; they must believe in, want, and practise the same things we do. And with this dismal and disastrous ignorance pervading our minds, we become confused, irritated and angry at what is now happening in Europe, in Russia, in China. Why, we murmur, do the Slavs in Russia create what is so plainly a new form of tyranny? Why are the Chinese not doing well with their brand-new, nice republic? Why are the French so naughty to the Germans and not nice to us? Why do the Italians bow down to a fat little man with a face like a Greek statue? And why do twelve million Germans dislike the republican form of government? The war was fought, we have heard it said, to make the world safe for democracy. Whatever the phrase meant in its context and as originally spoken, we Americans have taken it to mean or imply that the races of the world, one and all, are capable of self-government and freedom; capable of the special form of self-government and freedom which we ourselves have inherited and practise; and, accordingly, we feel that it is our privilege and duty to lead or force them to practise what we do.

Why should they not establish republics on our model and run them successfully? Why should they not esteem, as we do, the freedom of the citizen? Why are there now seven dictatorships in Europe, and likely to be more? Such mad Reaction seems almost to imply that the people of European countries are in some obscure way different from us; they cannot value what we do. How is such a thing possible? It is confusing, irritating. What shall we do about finding this foreign policy? Nay, how can

we even set out to have a policy or any relations whatever with lunatic nations who must really and truly be precisely like us, and yet behave as if they were not?

Putting aside the question of our foreign policy, let us take up another matter, and one of much more lasting importance.

Those among us who know Europe well, feel that the foremost nations,—and that means the foremost races of Europe,—have much to teach us. Not that we should imitate them, not that we should necessarily regard them as having attained a higher degree of culture than the home-bred article, but, simply, that being profoundly different from us, they have by virtue of this difference something unique, something we can receive and make our own. In education, philosophy, and criticism, in the arts, in science, the greater nations of Europe can give us at least something. For ill off as they at present are, heavily taxed, enervated, full of apprehension and despair, they yet continue to create or sustain their own several sorts of well-being, their own cultures.

But how can a man learn anything from another man if he holds that the other is precisely, and in all respects, like himself? We learn by admiration and love, and this love and admiration of another is always aroused by some difference, some superiority in the other person. But this reverence and regard for what another has, and we have not, whether it be his intellectual endowment or moral or spiritual power, is necessarily based on a willing, even a delighted, acceptance of the other man's individuality, his surprising difference from ourselves. It is so the lover regards his sweetheart; so the man of negative or passive mind regards one who creates what he cannot create, though able to use and enjoy it; and this receptive and

yet glowing and generous state of feeling seeks to understand this other human being in the very point of his difference, his singularity. Thus the lover tries to fathom his mistress in her feminine mind, her maidenly feelings, her womanly intuition and instinct. Of course he never can comprehend her, but he seeks to, and so seeking, his love and reverence grow; for if he does not comprehend the truths of her nature, at least he *apprehends* them. And thus, too, the enjoyer of an art regards the creator of it. Had we lived with the composer Sebastian Bach, with him and his spouse and their nine children,—or, was it thirteen?—in their quiet and well ordered home; even had we been there with Bach daily when he was in the act of composition, we could never have penetrated his secret, caught his creative trick in the very act, seen how it occurred, how it was; as, for instance, we can catch a conjurer taking a rabbit from a silk hat, see how he does it, and so, understanding the trick, do it ourselves. Bach had a secret, creative gift or power, as much a mystery to him as it would have been to us, had we been ever so near him. But our little understanding of the composer's mysterious gift, that is, of his difference from us, would have only increased our love of, and admiration for him, and we could very surely have apprehended, at least in a degree, the force and harmonious interplay of his moral and spiritual powers in which his unusual giftedness rooted itself. Some degree of understanding is always possible, even though the superiority be as great and mysterious and delightful as in Bach or Michelangelo or St. Francis or Lincoln; and on such degree of understanding follow love and admiration.

But where there is no understanding, rather misunder-

standing as between ourselves and another, what follows is generally mutual hostility or suspicion. And to bring my argument to bear, hostility and suspicion is what many of us to-day feel toward Italy and France. For we took it for granted that these peoples were like us; like us in this, that they "were just folks with hearts under their vests." And, lo! the thing is not so! Hence, I repeat, we feel confused, and a feeling of irritation grows apace.

What shall we, then, do? Why, to be sure, be pleased with the patent fact that these peoples are not as we are, but otherwise; study and enjoy their profound *difference* from us; and so, with minds freed from this ignorant assumption, and delivered from the poisonous and undermining dietetic of war propaganda, prepare ourselves to understand what and where we can; to sympathize, enjoy, and possibly even to admire and love.

Indeed, plainly enough, these foreign races are in many ways not like us. The thing is apparent in even the most trivial occurrences. Let me give an example. If we should read in our morning paper that Mr. Hiram Johnson had erected an altar made of fragments of granite or gneiss gathered from the battle-fields of Verdun, and that he went up weekly to this altar, underneath which reposed the remains of an unknown soldier,—his own, special unknown soldier,—and, arriving at the spot, he, alone, by himself, burned laurel leaves to the memory of the unknown warrior,—what should we think? Plainly, that the senator from California had lost something, and probably his mind.

Well, precisely this is what D'Annunzio does. He has erected such an altar, and he does, or he actually did, burn the leaves of the laurel before it. All Italy knows

this, and all Italy understands what he means by doing it. And we must recollect that D'Annunzio is not merely a poet, a novelist, and writer. He has been these things, but in the eyes of the Italian people he is, and remains, an important public man, an influence, a power, despite the fact that he failed in the Trentino and is somewhat waned in popularity.

But, the American press does not often speak respectfully of those who have fallen from popular esteem. It may be said of the press that it respects only what it fears, and it fears only power. So when a man loses power by going out of office or by moving against the popular will, the press immediately belittles him. It is not surprising, therefore, that one of our great newspapers, in commenting upon this action of D'Annunzio's, calls him "poor D'Annunzio," and says that were he anybody but D'Annunzio, "his presence would long ago have been coveted at clinics of psychotherapy."

The editorial from which I quote is of course a timely contribution to our misunderstanding of the Italian people. And how easily we may misunderstand that people is made plain by an article in "The New Republic." The article is by an Italian writer, Pressolini, and this is what he says:

"It is important for Americans to remember how the word liberty is understood in Italy. Here is a sign: 'Keep off the grass: don't pick the flowers.' To an American this means that he should keep off the grass and refrain from picking the flowers. If the sign seems obnoxious to him, he will seek legal means for having it removed. To the Italian, 'liberty' means his right to walk on the grass, pick the flowers, tear the bushes up, and throw the sign away. An American asserts his liberty

by changing the law; an Italian asserts his liberty by breaking the law and assailing the concept of law itself."

Clearly, the writer does not agree with the view held by my friend of the Young Men's Christian Association, that, because we all of us have hearts under our vests, because we are all human beings, we must, therefore, esteem the same things in the same degree.

Turning to France, it is plain enough that we misunderstand her people, too. And, indeed, how should we not? Our ignorance of European history, our neo-puritan attitude to life, illiberal, immoral, and narrow as it is; our belief that the races of the earth are all essentially alike; and the misinformation which, under the name of propaganda, was fed to us freely during the war, have all contributed to a thoroughgoing and masterly ignorance of the soul of the French people. And this ignorance is not a negative thing; it does not consist in our not knowing that the French are thus or thus. It is as positive as the effect of a pair of convex green lenses; that is, we look upon this great people through glasses which discolor and distort their characteristics.

In an old geography, at one time much used in the schools, it is written: "The French are a gay people, much addicted to levity, light wines and the dance." This statement lays, as it were, a solid foundation of falsehood. And in the pre-war times, now so remote, it was frequently added that the French were given to licentiousness, and had little feeling or respect for family life. Then the war coming on, we were informed that the French were warm-hearted, chivalrous, generous and polite. What shall we say of these statements? We must say something, for at the present moment, though we may continue to suppose them addicted to light wines and levity and not to be as

strict as we all are in our wedded lives, yet the most of us do not altogether see them as gay, chivalrous, and with warm or generous hearts. And, as I have said, this confuses us, and our feeling of hostility is aroused. What, then, shall we say or think? Surely, we have, first of all, to qualify or deny these nonsensical statements. It is, alas! true that Frenchmen drink red wine; but, "addicted" implies that they drink too much. Whereas one may almost go as far as to say that no Frenchman ever drinks too much; and this natural, ineradicable moderation differentiates them from the people of certain other well known countries. If "levity" means anything, it means that the French regard their family ties with a certain non-puritan lightness. Whereas it would be nearer the facts to say that of civilized races, the French race has the most rigid and unyielding regard to family ties. To the family, be it understood; not always to the wife. Thus a Frenchman may be untrue to his wife, but if his wife, seizing upon his act of disloyalty, proceeds to divorce him, the man is horrified or furious. Why should his family be broken up and his children orphaned because he has succumbed to a natural and more or less unavoidable infatuation? The thing is not rational. For, unlike ourselves, he has no respect whatever for infatuations as such. He does not, as we do, think it pure, wise, and necessary to base his marital life upon one of these sudden, recurrent fevers. They come and go, he will tell us, but the family remains.

Well, can this by any means, be driven into the American head? I believe not. Yet upon this conception of the importance and unshakable permanence of the family, French civilization is based. And the laws of

France may be said, on the whole, to sustain the erring French husband in this attitude.

Again, many of our young soldiers in France did not find the French people with whom they had any dealings to be chivalrous, gay, or polite. They will tell you, a fair number of them will, and with no mincing the matter, that the people they met were unchivalrous to women, morose, and consistently rude. And again what shall one say? This, first of all, that the Gallic attitude to woman, and the attitude of all the Latin peoples, is not and never has been chivalrous in *our sense of the word*. And, further, that their famous gayety is gayety of a sort, yes, but not of our sort. The Latin laughs, and may said to be gay, or appear gay, in the face of a clear and brief intellectual statement of some moral or other incongruity. He is moved to what we suppose is mirth by some discrepancy between the ideal and the fact, which the intellect perceives and makes plain; that is, Wit makes him gay. Well, Wit seldom makes us gay; rather, when the penetrative, rational faculty throws its cold, dazzling, intellectual light on some unacknowledged incongruity between the ideal and the actual, between what ought to be and what is, the American becomes restless and melancholy. It disappoints him. It's pessimistic. It ought not to be that way; and he sulks.

And as for politeness in the mass, the French are to-day, to speak plainly, a rudish people. They have become so, they themselves tell you, under the influence of what they practise and hold to be democracy, in which the enthusiasm for equality plays ten times as large a part as it does with us.

To know that they are rude, and mean to be, one has only to travel in a second-class compartment, where of

course one meets the great, forceful, ruling bourgeois class: the class which dominates France to-day; the class from which M. Poincaré springs, and whose moral temper he illustrates. And even if I am wrong in all this, if my experience happens in some way to be partial and peculiar, the fact remains that the French mean by politeness one thing, and we another. To us, to be polite means to exhibit good-will. To the Frenchman, politeness consists in forms; the formal use of the words, "Monsieur" or "Madame," with a host of other forms of phrase, are, they conceive, necessary. They are so, because they avoid friction; that is, the homicidal tendency inherent in man, and at any social moment easily arousable, is lulled or laid asleep by the use of these phrases. In America, save in the Southern States, we have no forms, and dislike them. We think them aristocratic, which undoubtedly they are.

But I do not seem to praise France? No; but I can, and with complete sincerity. What we most lack, they have in abundance. That is, the French have *mind*. They think clearly. Their emotions and desires do not mist or color the glass of their intelligence. Their civilization and culture are the immediate result of this intelligence. They apply their intelligence on all sides, to all things, to all activities. French character may have this or that defect, but certainly, the French people are the only people in Europe which will not—not for a moment,—tolerate and put up with stupidity.

I have said the French think clearly, and we do not. Let me show how, in what a strange and crooked way we sometimes think. Some months ago in St. Louis, a monument was set up and dedicated to the thirty-two children of that city who had recently been killed by motor-cars.

It is reported to bear this inscription: "In memory of child-life sacrificed on the altar of recklessness." Whose recklessness? Why, of course, that of the chauffeurs or drivers of these cars.

No Frenchman could take this point of view. In the face of such a false statement he would exhibit signs of that gayety which we fail to understand. He would say: "The recklessness which killed these thirty-two children was only *immediately* the cause of their deaths. For what enabled the chauffeurs to be so reckless; what placed them in a position where they could and would be likely to kill children—that was the *real*, the fundamental cause of the deaths of the children. What or who, then, did place them in that position? Clearly, the suffrage and will or the indifference and apathy of the inhabitants of St. Louis. Doubtless those inhabitants share the belief, common in our democratic time, that anybody can be a recipient of power. Now, a motor-car is an instrument of power. It can kill and often does when driven by nerveless or incompetent men or by men of a criminal indifference to life. In this case these cars did kill. Well, the inhabitants of St. Louis permitted,—that is, they granted,—this enormous power over life and death to a set of incompetents or criminals. Who is responsible for the deaths of the thirty-two children? Why, the people of St. Louis."

Now, no doubt a French writer would state this matter more concisely, more clearly, and above all he would feel more lively about it; but he would see it in this logical way.

I do not like to think so, but I fear that our people are temperamentally incapable of understanding the French. But, if we should seriously set ourselves to the task, we

should recall it to our minds that the French are Catholics, and we should then apply ourselves to understanding what this means. And it means a good deal. M. Leon Daudet, a man of note in his country, has recently written as follows:

"For a Frenchman no two systems of ethics exist; there is only one: the ethics of the Catholic Church, which has permeated our blood, our temperament, our ways of thinking, our behavior for hundreds of years, and which is inseparable (even in the eyes of the consistent unbeliever) from our national spirit and soul."

Here, it should be noted, there is no dubious question of racial ethics. There is merely the cultural effect of hundreds of years of Catholicism.

We must, then, understand Catholicism in order to understand the French? But, it may be said, the Protestant part of our population would, in doing this, lose sympathy for the French; its admiration would wane. Well, admiration on false grounds, sympathy for what does not exist, are dangerous things. It is well for us to know the truth, for the truth saves; saves, that is, from the errors consequent on falsehood. We should, then, with the necessary humbleness of mind try to know the Italians and the French for what they are, and not as figments of the imagination. When we know them as they are, we shall be no longer subject to the blindness which follows on a propaganda of falsehood, and to the distrust, irritation, and hostility which are our lot, now that the fog of that falsehood has begun to dissipate, and the truth begins to be apparent.

Many of my readers will think in their secret hearts that, at least, in the early pages of this dissertation, I use a tone of great levity, indulging myself in irony and

sarcasm; and, that these bad things are not helpful: that nothing but love is helpful. I can only answer that love and sympathy must know something of their object, and that generosity is not what is needed. As for irony, there are times when, in the face of folly and the worship of ignorance, such a tone may be called for. The legislature of Tennessee recently passed a statute forbidding the teaching of the theory of evolution in the public schools of that State. Must we, nay, can we, take such an action gravely? Is not such a deification of ignorance, such a narrow-minded, reactionary piece of folly, best met, best attacked, with the laughter that it naturally awakens? The thing is fantastic, fatuous. It merits contempt. It arouses sarcasm. Certainly the members of that legislature will not be moved, they will not be enlightened or their blindness healed, if we weep over them, and call them brothers, with all the generosity of feeling we can muster up for the occasion.

No, what Americans need to-day is not what they already in such large measure possess, generous and warm feelings, Christian kindness, the fraternal attitude to others. Of all the peoples of which I have any personal knowledge, we have the most of these expansive feelings, and it is a cause for just pride that we have them. In this respect our people is noble and great. But what we need, and need sorely, is to seek a truer knowledge, and not rest till we have attained it. For on knowledge understanding is based, and sympathy follows it. And, too, we need the light of reason. If that light, cast indifferently upon the unhappy legislature of Tennessee, or upon the nations of Europe, seems to us cheerless and cold, all the more do we need it; for its lack of false warmth, of sentimentality and of mistiness, means sim-

ply that we are thinking rationally, coolly, in a long-headed way, without prejudgments, without ignorant emotion.

Our grave and astonished disappointment in the after-war actions of the European nations, and in the nature of the peace of Versailles, insures that such revolution in our method of thinking will soon be under way. When once it is brought about, our American people will not be less warm-hearted or less generous. They will simply be more clear-headed. They will have learned that not every race can build up and sustain a Roman, or an American Republic; that some races have no turn for self-government, but, on the contrary, a sort of genius for fluidity and disorder; that other races, governing themselves well, dislike and condemn our *representative principle*, and even the civilization and culture of which we ourselves are proud. And going further how well it would be for us all, if we knew the moral stability, the refinement, and decorum of the life of certain large classes of the Chinese! How well could we understand the true greatness of England; her inestimable, unflinching, unyielding sense of justice! How well could we be led, in part, even to conceive of the undying force and fecundity in genius of the French peasantry! How well too, could we know that the people which inhabits Germany is a people not wanting in valor, in virtue, in kindness.

And, finally, how good it would be, in all ways, in the region of our own culture, as well as in international affairs, if we should come to know the great value, the unspeakable importance, of the principle of individuality, whether among men or among races and nations!

In the degree that such knowledge prevails among us we shall get rid of the tyranny of our uniformity, our

passion for turning out men on a standardized pattern. We shall feel that the measure of a man's worth to the community is not in his likeness to all other men, but in the degree of his difference from other men. And by the same token we shall feel that the great, creative races of our earth are to be esteemed and held in honor for their difference, the one from the other; and as we comprehend this difference in any one gifted race, we shall appreciate its value, and be able to convey something of it into our own life.

But whether these difficult things are so or not so, one thing is plain to all men: ignorance of a nation leads to misunderstanding, and misunderstanding paves the way for war.

NATIONAL WELL BEING

WE must not demand, not expect too much from a People. The mass of mankind will always remain ignorant of these things, and therefore always dependent on their leaders. The most we can look for is that politicians, school teachers, editors, and the men of the Press generally, who are the makers of public opinion, shall be informed: shall know something of other countries and other religions. The enlightening of ignorance, the opposition to carefully instilled falsehood devolves upon them.

But if a People, as such, must remain ignorant of all other Peoples, it must seek to know itself: must know, that is, what it likes and dislikes, what it believes and disbelieves in, and what it wants, or does not want, and will not have. Only so, can it become civilized, and provide itself with that intellectual and moral well-being which shall supplement its material civilization and be the common possession of all. This self-knowledge, even though it may remain unconscious, or shall be rarely expressed, is as important for a nation or a tribe, as a like self-knowledge is for any one man. A nation thus indued is on the highway to unity, concord, and the creation of good things. But if a people does not know what it cares for; what thing or things it will struggle and fight for, you have at once uncertainty, dissension, discord; and you may easily have a revolution or a series of such; or civil war. You will, surely, endure perpetual tumult, uproar,

and that sort of blind, passionate, ceaseless and sterile commotion which many writers, to-day, take for a sign of health in the bodies social and politic; and from which they expect wonderful things. But, nothing may come of all this, just as nothing comes of the perpetual pounding of the surf on the strand. The billows advance and recede. The sands shift. Nothing is constructed, nothing grows. There is no progress. It is thus, only worse, with a people which cannot decide upon one way of life. This indecision, with its consequent, accompanying oscillatory movements, now backwards, now forwards, has, until recently, been perceptible in every country of Europe. One set of men wish to build the House up and make it stronger; another set will burn it down. Between building and burning there is no compromise. Germany previous to Hindenburg's election, Italy before Mussolini took matters in hand, and England previous to the defeat of the general strike are all three examples of a state of affairs which, though common to many nations and times, has, none the less, never been productive of aught but misery, bloodshed, degeneration; and, ultimately of lassitude and despair.

Such conflict of antagonistic socio-political creeds is not, however, confined to the sphere of government. The effort of every people is, inevitably, towards the achievement of the highest and most life-giving culture, in which all shall share, though, necessarily, since men themselves vary, in varying degrees. But, here too, if one man's moral code, his way of thinking, his habits and customs are cause of wrath and contempt to another man, there will, clearly, be no likelihood of compromise, and hence the moral and spiritual arena will be given over to a barren conflict. It is thus where class-war is ingrained

in the economic system. There are then two nations, or two peoples, within one national boundary: each knowing what it wants, and neither can have it, without the destruction of the other.

But, irreconcilable differences in opinion are not the only cause of national ill-being. It may be, that some cruelty of circumstance has been active as a degenerating force; some advance of the Polar Ice, or some Thirty Years' War. Or, perhaps, coming nearer home, the people, though industrious and seated in the midst of plenty, allows itself to lapse from, and lose all those nobler and higher values, which constitute the greatness of man, and are, at once, his consolation, his power, his pleasure, and the grace and glory of his life.

A great race, in this predicament, may know itself: but, it knows itself on a lower level. And, unfortunately, there will always be ignorant and coarse-grained men, conservative, through fear, and therefore conservative only of what is ruinous and bad; men holding rigidly to ignorance, and the distrust of Reason; who will swear that the defect, the state of moral and other indigence and want, is regular, righteous and the decree of God. It is the *Old Religion*, or the *Old Morals*. Or, it is the glorious, ancient Dullness:—the decrepitude and blest Darkness in which our Fathers walked.

But, Man, like the element of water, is an active creature. When, therefore, he is repressed, and stagnated beyond a certain measure, though quiescent for generations, he will, in time, rebel. The vivacity of life within him needs motion. He demands liberty. The matter is far from subtle. We all know the black dissatisfaction, the bitterness which gathers and festers in the Soul, when there is no outlet for its activities. The Moment is our

life and when the Moment ceases to smile upon us, we look about us for the cause; or, if the cause be not outward, we look within; and search our own Soul:—or, it may be wiselier said, our own Soul searches us. It will, then, ask us, what is our aim and ideal: our desire; the thing we want and lack.

That this searching for the soul's food, often takes place in the individual, is well known; and well-known that sawdust is supposed to satisfy it. The movement that follows such unrest is more easily seen, no doubt, in the political sphere. America has, many times, experienced such a searching and seeking to find herself; her highest and best; that is, her permanent and ideal self. The years preceding the Revolution and the Civil War were, indubitably, such periods of political and moral self-discovery. Her statesmen, her authors, were all alike engaged in this task. To-day, we are not so eager in this search. Supposing it to be a wise activity, necessary for our spiritual health and unity,—could we ask a more penetrating question than the simple one: "What is the *worst* of America?" And, would it not be well to ask the question now, before the next war breaks out, or the next revolution occurs?

THE AMERICAN MALADY

AT a clinic for children, recently held in a county town in Virginia, the capable woman physician was called upon to examine a wretched, very little child of the unfortunate poor-white class. Having looked him over, she handed him back to his barefoot sister, and, instead of noting his several specific defects on the card under her hand, she wrote the words: "Everything all wrong. Hopeless."

I was reminded of this scene in reading that formidable compilation of critical protest, published some two or three years ago, entitled *Civilization in America*. The book contains thirty essays, on thirty subjects, by thirty dissatisfied experts, and is in the nature of a critical clinic held upon the rest of us. As I galloped through this series of essays in dissent, I saw as in a vision these United States passed, anxious, naked, and bawling, to the laps of the thirty authoritative gentlemen; and I seemed, by that inner audition granted to the visionary, to hear the sad expected comment of all thirty of them: "Everything all wrong. Hopeless. Next nation, please."

The co-authors of *Civilization in America* set out to diagnose our national disease: to tell us what is wrong with our America, with the life we lead. A good deal seems to be wrong. We seem to be in a bad way. On a first, hasty reading, we might imagine, or hope, that this consensus of unfavorable opinion was the product of European travelers. But not so. Four fifths of the writers are American-born and of the original stock.

The fact is pertinent to any unfavorable opinion we may form about the book. For home truths by home people are one thing, and comment upon us by foreigners another.

We feel sure of it, since most of us have heard or read how, in our hot and sensitive youth, the great Dickens and the delightful Mrs. Trollope, setting foot on our shores, with diagnostic intentions, glanced hastily at the Yankee patient, and using no very obscure or technical terms, said: "Coarse, crass, ignorant, impudent, barbarous, green yet corrupt, and strangely embarrassed with a superfluity of spittle." And our fathers further informed us how the patient rocked with rage on his invalid couch of the Alleghany slopes, and the two doctors returned, calm and complacent, to the perfections, the infinite mercy and charm of the London slums. In our own day Mr. Chesterton, Mr. Wells, and a number of Continental writers have turned the glasses of their attention upon our moral landscape, but without, we feel, affording us much insight into our own case; the truth, if I am in any way wise in such matters, being that the European mind cannot much avail us. It is too full of false expectation.

The word by which we so splashily indicate our state of affairs,—the word *democracy*,—is to the European a stumblingblock. We and he employ the one word, but by it we intend disparate things. The European sets foot on our soil predisposed to find European democracy in full flower and power. Instead, he finds a republic; a thousand years of tradition and usage, of unwritten, even unspoken agreements; and he finds, too, something subtle yet powerful; profound but innocent; something continually and freely criticized, and yet apparently im-

pregnable to radical change; something religious, and yet cynical. A year ago, in Paris, the editor of one of the more popular French dailies said to me very nearly as follows:—

“Yes, I have traveled in your country. But your countrymen are not good at explaining things, and there is so much in America that needs explanation. For example: your democracy—is it democracy? If so, why do you open the session of your Congress with a petition to a Supreme Being? And is your President a High Priest, that he comes forth, as it were, robed in a sort of sacerdotal style, a few days previous to that Feast of Gratitude you hold in November, and delivers a national prayer? And I ask you, is it democracy when the Governor of one of your States appoints,—he, of his own volition, appoints a Senator *ad interim*? What I seemed to see was, for me, not democracy at all. I don’t know what it was, or is. But democracy, as we conceive it, no.”

His face was grave, and he sighed much as a man might sigh who had been disappointed in an affair of the heart.

It is conceivable that European democracy is one thing, our own another. We Westerners must, therefore, turn to our fellow countrymen for the mirror which shall show us our own deficiencies. I go even further. Those men, whether or not born and bred among us, who are *European-minded*, can avail us little by their critical comment.

“No, I don’t feel at home in America.” The words, precisely as I quote them, were spoken to me by a well-known young poet. “I hate America; I hate the people. I’m going to Paris, to live in the Latin quarter.”

I was sorry for this young American; sorry for the Latin quarter. We may, some of us do, love European

countries. We rejoice, and should, in the richness, the completion, of European civilization. But whither, toward what, does it all seem to move? As we regard it and reflect upon it, having, possibly, the historic sense, we are convinced that Europe is not moving in our direction, but in another direction. We feel,—even if we do not know,—that whatever flower of culture we may produce, it will not be a European flower. We may come to perfection, or not, but we must take our way to it by paths other than the paths the European treads.

Civilization in America affords no very bright and shining outlook, but it is a field of sunbeams compared with the dark and rapidly gathering storm of critical disapproval which confronts us in the novels of what is called "the younger set." And if it were not so, our American attitude toward mere critics is that they are professional faultfinders; so that disposes of them. But that our writers of fiction should be out of sympathy with their own country-folk is another horse entirely, if only because we read fiction when, being tired, we have nothing else to do,—and why should a tired man be pinched at and pessimized? Moreover we feel, however obscurely, that novelists, being dedicated to an art of understanding, can have but one criterion of any action or state of affairs: whether, namely, it tends to increase or diminish the well-being of man. This inclines us to consider their account of us, however fleetingly. What is their account? How do they see us?

Well, the authors of *Main Street* and *Miss Lulu Bett*, of *Cytherea*, of *This Side of Paradise*, and,—turning to the older set,—of *Ethan Frome* and *Unleavened Bread*, in portraying our American environments, undoubtedly register disapproval or dismay or dislike. They declare our

circumstances to be destructive of human happiness and perfection. And it may be of moment that so many of the new poets agree with them. So, too, do many members of the professional class; and this class creates, or sustains, our material civilization.

I can imagine that at this point the American drummer, with whom I frequently consort,—and find him no fool,—will call me a calamity-howler, tell me to ‘go chase myself,’ or, even worse, ask me if I hate my own country.

I suppose that in confessing something more than a sneaking affection for our common country, a writer may subject himself to being called a conservative, even a patriot. But I will go boldly at it, and declare at once that I like the race which,—when we wish to irritate the Jew or the Celt to frenzy,—we call the Anglo-Saxon. I like the American, and, if I am narrowly inquired of, I shall reply with malice and candor that the American I like is the American-American. The strange habits and preferences of our people do not irritate me beyond bearing. I retain my calm in the presence of their monstrous religiosity and their occasional extremism in politics. I am not moved so much as,—I fear,—I ought to be, when they accept a man like Bryan, as fitted for leadership and public office. Even the total blank and vacuity of the American mind after it has submitted itself to four years of college education leave me in a friendly and amiable mood; and there is a positive aspect to my tolerance.

These United States are a *man's* country. The wilderness is not too far away; it invites and can be enjoyed without paying a ransom. If you are weary of the college campus, or of suburban felicities, or of what Philadelphians call the “Main Line,” you take the train to New Brunswick, or the Navajo Reservation, and refresh your-

self with hardship and the simple life. To sum up my patriotism, I believe that I like American life for many of the same reasons for which the sailor likes what he calls dirty weather: there is, in our state of affairs, something chaotic and adverse which calls for action and provokes high spirits.

If a writer of much vogue and authority, for example, Mr. Gamaliel Bradford,—should thus open his heart and declare his ease in Zion, we can all readily imagine the outcry that would follow. Not only the poets, but all those others I have mentioned, would chorus their protest at him the instant he appeared on the back platform of the Pullman car on his way to the Painted Desert; and Mr. Bradford would find his firm and lucid style and all his wit quite drowned in the tumult of dissentious protest.

“What!” he would hear: “These base and brutalizing sports are your ideal! Let us tell you then, mountain sheep and mackerel are not America. The America we know is a morgue of mind. Republican institutions are as outworn as chain armor, democracy is the dream of a drunken fool, and our people are corrupt and contented. To be at home in a country can mean only that you are at ease, satisfied with its mind, its spirit, its social habits. But perhaps you exuberate merely. Well, if you do, cease from exuberation, quit throwing your style; or else live hereafter and forever in a wicky-up or a teepee and leave to us to create, by antipathy, by indignation, by compassion, criticism, and a justified anger, the future you care nothing about: that better Time and State which you are incapable of even imagining. If we mistake you, then say in plain words whether or no you agree with

us that something is extremely wrong with America and American life.²⁴

Mr. Bradford, being no doubt hardened to the hailstorms of invective and tolerably indifferent to supplication, would probably make no answer to these suffering voices.

But if the young and famous addressed me in these terms, I should certainly feel reined up. I should cease from 'throwing my style,' if I had any to throw, and I should try to give an account of my opinions in the plainest language.

Well, then, I agree with them. There is something wrong with our American life, unconscionably wrong. I am aware of it as they are, and I feel indignation as they do,—or, at least, an ardent desire for a better state of things. Mr. Van Wyck Brooks and Mr. Harold Stearns, among those who have contributed to *Civilization in America*, indicate clearly enough that our America is not doing and being all she could; that something is very much the matter with us.

Again, the writers of fiction have, I believe, observed us correctly. I cannot think that *Main Street* and *Babbitt* are false pictures of our life. The sordidness, gloom, and almost unrelieved *tedium vitæ* described or indicated in the *Spoon River Anthology* are not something manufactured by Mr. Masters, but something observed and felt.

Our state of things justifies and calls for such sentiments. It is only when these writers come to specify and point out the evils at work in our life that I find myself no longer at one with them. I feel that their attitude is the product of European-mindedness. We are, indeed, sick; but not because we are Americans; or because we

are so largely of the Nordic race; or because we inherit the Common Law and the Bill of Rights; or because Patrick Henry,—as is often asserted,—was a windbag, or Jefferson a worse one, and Washington apparently a truthful, perhaps even a continent, man.

The virtues and values of a people do not constitute their weakness. On what point, then, shall we fix our attention, in order to discover the true nature of our ailment?

A French writer has said of China that it is not a country or nation, but a civilization. And what a flood of light is thrown by this observation on the whole field of thought in which we now find ourselves! There is, then, a thing called civilization, apart from the political organization. And this civilization may, possibly, be something apart or aside from religion. So that, if both Church and State were abolished overnight, there would still be this civilization. The American mind can hardly conceive of such a state of things. The sectarian churches, the President, the public schools, the Supreme Court, Congress, this and these, or what proceeds from these, are civilization, and there is and can be nothing left over, or outside these.

Well, China is too remote a dream for our interpretation. Let us, therefore, take France herself as an example of the truth of this French observation. If the French Government ceased, or changed into some other form; if the Roman Church passed away like smoke, French civilization would not be radically or immediately affected. It would continue to function. French art, science, and literature, French social habits, would not suddenly stagnate. They might even increase the energy of their activities.

And so in every country, though an organized polity and a traditional religion are primary, and possibly, in the long run, necessary, as being conservators of civilization, yet they are not the thing itself. They are not all of man's life,—not even half. In our country, as in others, men live only semi-occasionally in political thought and action; still more semioccasionally in the sphere of religious feeling and belief. When the idea that politics and religion are not eight tenths of civilization offends the American, we have to remind him that a man's love of his mother is not an effect of politics or of piety. Science, art, literature, thought, and the pleasure we may possibly take in fishing are not the products of Church or State.

And so, if we want to know what the American Malady really is, we must,—at least, in my opinion,—avert the eyes of the mind from our self-governed ecclesiastical establishments and from the State. We must turn our thoughts upon the life men lead, aside from the ecclesiastical and political spheres. We must, in short, look into our *civilization*. Instantly we feel that we are on the right track. For the American man is really contented with the political state of things: he casts his vote without tears or nausea; and he is not more than gently critical and dissatisfied when, in a pew, he sings a hymn of which the burden may be that life is a vale of tears, and the sooner over the better for all concerned. In his heart he is aware that life and the world mean much to him.

But,—and here we have it,—when he locks the door of his office, when he leaves the church or the voting-place, he is confronted with his own leisure; and instantly the poor fellow is struck to the heart with the most intolerable and inescapable boredom. He may not know why he is

bored, but he knows that he is, and he makes no bones about it. Time and himself hang heavy on his hands.

The proof that this is so is on every street-corner in every town, where, when our citizens are not politically or religiously engaged, we shall see them loafing, idling, and wondering what next, and where they look the discontent they feel. This discontent is so universal and so notorious that we sometimes pride ourselves on its ravages, the idea being that we shall be the more ambitious, and work the harder. Children, artists, and *morons*, we think, may glow with the happiness of mere being, or with the love of their games; but not the rest of us. We know and appreciate the value of being under the lash; of being gnawed upon by dissatisfaction. Boredom energizes, for we have to escape it, and, reflecting that to-morrow will soon be here, we itch for the relief that its routine labor will afford us.

Thus, if I am right, our leisure hours have no good meaning for us. We meet them as a man meets a dun or the shadow of death. But, in Heaven's name, what is the reason why a robust, self-governing, and sufficiently pious people is subject to intolerable tedium in those hours when it is not at work, or being voted, or prayed for? It will be understood that I speak of the mass of our people,—not of those who are set apart by their possession of wealth or education, and decidedly not of those few who have been bred up in European or Colonial traditions of the conduct of life; for these latter know how to live with satisfaction to themselves.

Again, it must not be thought that all of us, on leaving our work at the stroke of five, sink at once and supinely into a state of coma or into boredom; that we make no conscious effort to come at diversion and pleasure. This

may happen with many. But others of us, when the day's task is finished, seek distraction, pleasure, and interest, as eagerly, as feverishly as any of the peoples of our earth. Yet we rarely obtain what we seek because we do not know how to entertain ourselves; and, wanting this great art of civilization, we try to kill time and obliterate care by speed, by yet more speed, or by doing a variety of things, none of which we care much to do.

Fixing our attention now on the mass of our people, who, if I at all know them, are habitually discontented, we need not be deeply read in Freud to be aware that a continuous, an habitual, discontent is a symptom of something extremely wrong with the person so afflicted, or with the life about him. It is as much a symptom of a disease or a morbid state of the soul and mind, as a subnormal pulse would be an indication of some physiological disturbance. Such a symptom implies a cause. What then are the causes,—or is there perhaps a main cause,—of our spiritual tedium?

Every son of man seeks to live a good sort of life: seeks, that is, so to build up and arrange his life that solid good shall be attained. But, in our country, many and powerful forces obscure the knowledge of what is a solidly good, desirable life. We often speak, in an excellent idiom, of having a good time. In that matter the Latin man seems a happy throw of nature. So, too, the Negro. Not long since I was having a heart-to-heart talk with a magnificent black fellow who, as is so often the case, expressed to me in simple Negro language a profound truth. "White folks can do a lot," said he, "but they don't have a good time."

Yet the white folks' forefathers did once have a good time. What are the influences which have brought the

sons of these forefathers to the point where they live a meager and miserable life, so little responsive to the hungers and thirsts of the mind and soul that, in leading it, they are eternally dissatisfied?

To begin with, we are, through the lack of tradition incident to our emigration,—followed by repeated immigrations,—a folk cursed with bad cooking, and, as a result, with malnutrition far beyond anything observable among the peasantry of France or Germany. Thus our citizens are tortured with what they are pleased to call ‘stomach trouble.’ Again, our newly-rich, rising rapidly into their new- riches, rise as they may, have nothing to rise into. Having, that is, through the acquisition of money, attained to the possibility of a greater degree of self-perfection,—and therewith happiness,—they make no effort in that direction, preferring to remain what is called ‘plain’; which is to say, really, unfinished; which is to say, halfbaked; rather than to grow and mold themselves into a more completed and worked-upon humanity. They have no Ideal Man, no single loved and admired character, on which to model themselves. They remain as they were, but, wishing to look different, their tailors gratify the last *libido*.

Furthermore, the American family has no intellectual interests. It does not even know what such things are.

Still further, we are nomads, and the Ford car, with other inventions, invites and indurates the nomadic habit. But a rich, deep, and powerful civilization cannot be founded on a tribe of nomads, who pitch their modern shacks to-day along the Susquehanna, and, exhausting the soil, move to-morrow to the Wasatch Range.

Lastly, there emanates from our great cities a peculiar moral effluvium of vulgarization, an *odor mortalis*, of

which London and Berlin also are capable. Our mountaineers, it is true, are ignorant and our country people miseducated; but they are not vulgar. The Arab of the Arabian Desert is not vulgar, and neither is the Apache. But that our cities vulgarize is too plain to need proving; though, if proof were needed, our spoken English and manners would suffice. And we should not forget that vulgarity is no trifling matter, for it is composed of ignorance and of belief in it; of incapacity for intellectual distinction; of distaste for moral and all other refinements; and it is usually attended by insolence and ill-will. A vulgarized human being is thus a damaged soul, an infection to his fellow men; a danger to the State; a contributive cause to the decline or corruption of the moral well-being that we try to embrace in the word *culture*.

Now, if many of us are vulgar, and multitudes of us are nomadic; and if these vulgarized nomads suffer from stomach trouble and have no intellectual interests; and if, when they make money, and are thus free to do and be what they choose, they then choose to do and be only what they have hitherto done and been, leaving ideals, noble behavior, intellectual enjoyments, the pleasure of the arts, and the pursuit and practice of the simple life, to their chauffeur,—well, all this does not precisely make for a rich and Athenian culture, not even for the thrice-hammered hardihood of Rome.

I have mentioned above a very few of the forces which are adverse to that larger, freer, more fruitful life, the essentially good life I speak of, and to the contentment which must follow on leading such a life. But these, though contributory, are all negative powers. Whatever it is that brings us to a suffering and dissatis-

faction so debilitating and so general must itself be positive and operate upon great masses of our population. With this conception in mind, no one will be astonished when I say that a false conception of what makes for a good life is the main and active cause of our great American malady of boredom. This false conception, apart from its sources, is as positive and powerful as any believed-in truth. For error is as creative as truth, only it creates evil. And here we are at once in the sphere of ideals, and in that sphere we know well enough that the fruit of a false conception of things is not often, or for long, anything true or excellent.

If a naturally truthful man imagines that he can take up with a course of lying, and does take up with it, the result will be that he will lower his pride, poison his serenity, and weaken his force. With a born liar, not so. His lies may even conceivably intensify his health. But the truthful man will be undermined by his own error.

So a tender-hearted man may indulge in this error: he may imagine that he can kill an old woman and, stealing her hoard of gold, live happily ever after. The hero of *Crime and Punishment* imagined that he could do this, and he tried it. His error, his false conception, led him on to self-horror and ruin.

Our American brother is like the hero of Dostoevsky's novel. The false conception under which he labors, the error he believes to be truth, and on and in which he acts, is that he thinks there is no good life apart from labor, politics, and piety. By a good life, I mean, as I have sought to indicate, not merely and exclusively moral conduct, but the life which is good for us because it is consonant with our higher nature, answers every demand of that nature, and, being thus necessary, brings us to every

sort of fulfillment, to increase of all that is best in us, and so to happiness,—or at least contentment. Such a life implies freedom of choice and self-activity, and brings it about that the man leading it flourishes in health of body, mind, and spirit, producing fruit according to his kind, finding and fulfilling himself. Speaking in terms of religion, when he leads such a life he obeys the voice of God. Such a life he feels to be good, and he calls it good.

But the larger number of our countrymen are convinced that labor, politics, and piety are the whole of life; and this error takes a still more positive form when the misguided man believes the pleasures of art, music, poetry, social meetings, and the intellectual life, to be in themselves irreligious, low, bad, or negligible. Now see how this false ideal delivers the American over to misery and vice.

He despises and discards those things which the soul of man creates for its own joy. In so doing he puts himself on a level with crude and semi-barbarous tribes like the Kaffys or Yaquis. For these, too, plough the earth for bread, live under a system of traditional custom, as binding as law, and are pious according to their own lights. They lack nothing but, simply, civilization; which is to say, they lack the good life,—the sort of life, let us say, led by Jefferson and Franklin when they were not at work.

It is, I feel, sufficiently obvious that our people do actually live a life that is crude and semi-barbarous. It was not always so. Historical events have deprived the American of much that he should and once did possess. He is not conscious of the loss of these means of a finer and more copious life. He does not know that time,

circumstance, and the course of things have, with exquisite sleight of hand, stolen away all his best means of happiness, all the wonder and wealth of his soul. All he knows is that his life is empty, and he feels sad.

If we could plainly show the causal process of his deprivation of good, we should not only be breathing life into history,—we should be at once made aware of the true nature of the things he has lost.

But, to do this, we should be obliged to write a novel; for only a novel, with its infinitude of loving detail, could show us the American man in the process of becoming, of being compelled to become, the thing he now is. I have often wished the task might be undertaken: that a novel, preferably long and delightful, should be composed, showing the English or Scotch emigrant, say, of the later seventeenth century, landing on our shore, and being, in the years following, stripped bare of half his intellectual and spiritual powers and possessions.

We should then see a robust and adventurous man step from civilization and a rich popular culture into the void of the wilderness; we should see him provided, on his landing, with a complex and ancient religion; and we should then see him, as pioneer, hunter, and backwoodsman, lose all the fineness of that religion, cease to practice its rites, forget its formulæ, and retain of it little but the memory. We should see his mate obliged to prepare the food for their fourteen children helter-skelter, as best she might, and we should shortly be witness to her resort to saleratus, hot bread, pork, and that man-destroying weapon, the frying-pan.

We should see dance, ballad, and glee in the process of being forgotten. We should see the Englishman attenuate his social customs, his manners, his jollity; and

the Scot forget the gay or tragic songs of his forbears, air and words alike slipping away from him into the soft, perpetual twilight of the primeval forest.

And presently we should assist in the emigration of his children, to the Valley of Virginia, or the banks of the Wabash, and again should watch the heavy, swaying schooner-wagons of the children of those children drifting slowly westwards, across the Father of Waters, to the Great Plains, the prairies, where at last their own descendants are lost to sight and knowledge under the shadow of Mount Shasta. And observing narrowly those famous covered wagons on their long trail, in every mountain gorge, in every defile lit up and blooming with the pale large flowers of the rhododendron, and on the gently undulating blue-green prairie, we should find the ashes of the fires they lit, and about which they warmed their cold fingers, and told stories of how their forefathers lived in the tide-water county of Old Virginia, in the green fields of Sussex, or on the bonnie braes of Kilravock. And searching among those innumerable circles of faded, former fires, among the pale ashes of oak and pine, or in the charred dung of the buffalo, we should find in every heap their loved, their lost, their forgotten, their disused spiritual possessions: not only bits of colored glass, beads, shreds of calico, lying there to witness that world-shaking, world-creating historical event,—the Great Migration; not these only, but other and greater things, dropped, lost, and put by of stern necessity: song and dance, with violin and clavichord, garlands of flowers, graces and charms, manners and customs, convivial meetings, festivals, the life of the mind, and respect for it, gayeties of heart, and all diversions, all distinctions, all that in the past their forefathers had created that they

might live in something more than the momentary taste of the palate and touch of the palm.

And with these means of happiness and of a full and flourishing life, we should stumble on yet higher things,—music of infinite remoteness, creeds as old, almost, as the rise of man, the grace and charm of an ancient and mellow religion, and—yes—even the Psalms of David and the songs of Shakespeare. I repeat: we should, in all verity and sincereness, see these things, and far more than these, lying moldy and forgotten in the charred ashes of the dung of the buffalo.

But, did our pioneer forbears retain nothing? They retained what they could use under the pressure of the new circumstances: a stark moral code, and cockfights. They retained horse-racing, the traditions of English liberty and law. They held to that respect for woman which we have seen flower in the immediate past. Else—nothing, or but little. This profound and enthralling work of fiction would, no doubt, let us understand that the more Puritanical the immigrant was, the less he lost; for the less he had to lose, having already in the old country suffered a denudation of all liberal values.

Moreover, if our gifted novelist should continue his story, we should presently feel the bitter wind of Calvinism gather its malign forces, and blow on the descendants of these pioneers; or we should see them converted to an Evangelical creed, which, with the deaths of those extraordinary saints and gentlemen, the Wesleys, must perforce be upheld and continued by men of coarse natures and ignorant minds.

And in the third volume of this somewhat prolonged *Story of Man*, we should be confronted with the life-destroying forces of the Industrial Era.

But at this point, I feel convinced, my optimistic commercial traveler will again turn upon me, and say that I have not advanced one scrap of proof that the life we Americans lead is a poor one, in fact and actually; not a scrap of proof that we are discontented or unhappy. He will probably add that in his opinion we are aglow with the most blithe and winsome joy; and that we are a profoundly cultured people, as witness Mr. Ford and the late William Jennings Bryan. And not only so, but an intellectual yet wisely optimistic people, as witness Mr. William Allen White. And I feel sure that he will end by asserting that my picture of our life is too dark, too monotonously dismal to be true.

Well, the gentleman can be comforted: for I hasten to assure him that, touching the dismalness and monotony of American life, I have so far painted or sketched the thing in a dazzle of crimson and gold: let him have patience, and he shall presently come to what is darker and dismaler, a good deal.

That the leisure hours of a million men are not joyous does, however, not admit of exact demonstration. Still, if I must play the game of a citation of living men in proof of my thesis, then, indeed, my heart leaps up, for I know that my enemy has given himself into my hand, and I cry out, as boys do at Prisoner's Base, 'I will take Mr. William Allen White for *my side*.' He shall bear witness. He shall tell us in what degree the Kansan loves and lives a full and flourishing life, and to how much happiness he seems to attain.

I take Mr. White for my side the more readily as he has such a hearty appreciation of the value of material goods, and such an understanding of the part that law and political justice play in human life. And, further, Mr.

White is genial, and fair, and humorous. Impossible not to be carried along with what he writes. He is a man not at war with life; he does not see it darkly; he does not rebel. He is even faintly tinged with our roseate optimism, and he is one of the few men who can speak of our modern Puritanism without 'riling' the rowdy Cavalier, who inhabits, I am afraid, the bosom of every true lover of life. Mr. White, too, is in love with Kansas.

To be in love is an engaging state of mind, and in Mr. White results in a desire to celebrate the object of his affections. He is aware of the imperfections of his bride, but he prefers to dwell on her material well-being, her 'determination to make the Ten Commandments work,' her stark morality, her political church, and her eager reforming spirit. His bride may lack the graces and elegancies of the ladies of the "Boule-Miche," but she has the main thing: she's a moral woman, and a good housekeeper. And yet, despite his admiration for Kansas, Mr. White makes certain admissions. And his tone in making them fills me with a fear that all is not as well with Kansas as we have hitherto thought.

Mr. White describes the physical well-being, the comfort, justice, order, and health of his fellow citizens, and expatiates on the fact that his own neighborhood enjoys 'twenty-five miles of hard-surfaced roads, and more telephones and Ford cars than there are heads of families.' He writes (I change the order of his sentences with but a very little malice): 'We are a deeply religious people. Life and Liberty are esteemed. We have no criminal class. Still we are not a joyless people.' It is here that I begin to feel a dusk of anxiety creep upon me.

'Deep in our hearts is the obsessed fanaticism of John Brown.' But I am under the impression that fanaticism

is no very cordial friend to human liberty, and is an embittered foe to all that is liberal and enlarging in life. I feel almost inclined to ask if it would not be better to have a few less hard-surfaced roads, and a few, just a few more criminals, and not so many fanatics.

Mr. White, however, goes on to tell us that those who strive to make life beautiful for themselves and others in Kansas do not find, if I understand him, much response to their endeavor. That Kansas, though just and thriving, has not as yet produced a great poet, or musician, or philosopher; and that surely democracy is futile if out of it 'something worthy,—eternally worthy' does not come! 'The Tree shall be known by its fruits,' and finally, to quote him directly: "Nothing is more gorgeous in form and color than a Kansas sunset; yet it is hidden from us. The Kansas prairies are as mysterious and moody as the sea in their loveliness, yet we graze and plough them, and do not see them. . . . Yes," he continues, "though Kansas is well off, she lacks joy!"

And reflecting upon his own previous assertion that Kansas disapproves of the Latin way of life, with its temperate drinking of wine, its singular indifference to continence in the male animal, and its frank delight in songs of a somewhat pagan nature, he is moved to make a very wise observation. He makes it, as it were, doubtfully, modestly, but he makes it.

"Surely all joy, all happiness, all permanent delight that restores the Soul of man, does not come from the wine, women, and song which Kansas frowns upon!"

And his conclusion is that this question, the question of the absence of 'joy,'—that is, I suppose, of natural and wholesome pleasure,—is not a Kansas question, but 'tremendously American.'

Well, I feel that with such a witness, 'my side' wins. Mr. White is surely as much dissatisfied with American life as I should wish every man to be; and his dissatisfaction goes straight to the point I labor,—we lack 'joy.' He sums the matter up in telling us that in Kansas we have an energetic and just people, fermenting with reformers, enjoying 'a perfect sewer-system,' and an infinity of telephones, and Ford cars; but which yet possesses little or none of that 'permanent delight which restores the soul of man.'

'These Kansans,' then,—or these Americans,—have the prairies, with their changeful colors, their moods; but the prairies possess for them no other significance than what they may find in their front parlor, papered with magenta roses and pink lilies.

How was it that a Russian serf, the poet Kolsoff, could so rejoice in the beauty of the Steppes he ploughed for another? Or how was it that an ignorant stripling, half-naked, and, later in life, far more criminal in his actions than Kansas would countenance, could, in his high tone, sing, or say:—

"He sendeth the springs into the valleys . . .
The wild asses quench their thirst."

To the American it would be indubitable that none but wild asses would quench their thirst at these springs of God.

Mr. White, in short, thinks that we Americans have no love for nature, get nothing from it,—nothing more than a dog or an ox gets. And, further, he indicates that whether Kansans, or otherwise, we fail to get anything from the two great, popular and associated arts, Poetry and Music. Yet these two arts are main-traveled roads

to a world of life-giving pleasure and human perfection; and they are, too, within the specific compass of our racial giftedness.

Now, a people to which Nature, Music, and Poetry are as blank as they probably are to a dog or an ox, is necessarily pitched back upon coarse, animal pleasures; or it seeks for the excitement which our human constitution demands, in the stimulus provided by Coca-Cola drunk in excess. For social diversion, not untinged by pathos, an auction-sale must serve; or at a pinch, the funeral of some unknown citizen, where death itself makes us feel, if nothing else, at least the tremor of apprehension. When all else fails, there is alcohol; and wanting that, the man can sleep.

It may be argued that, so far, I have taken into consideration only the rougher sort of people. What of our college boys and girls, with their enthusiasm for truth and beauty? What of our well-paid college professors? I am under the impression that our college professors will in a measure agree with me, that most of our college boys are disdainful of the arts and sciences; that the American student is a fine, upstanding, honest, well-intentioned, athletic, and empty-headed fellow; that at thirty or fifty he is this still, and nothing more; and—no light matter,—that his ideal men are the ideal men of the whole community: Mr. Ford, Bryan, and others upon whom the professor looks somewhat coldly.

Turning now to the professor himself, the truth is that he is a Greek among early, very early, and very ignorant and crass Romans. He tutors these kindly barbarians as best he may. But he cannot impart to them his spirit, the necessary spirit of skepticism in Science; the necessary spirit of belief in Beauty; and his vital and creative

respect and enthusiasm for intellectual values. He cannot inspire them with these beliefs and enthusiasms because, like the standard men they admire, they hold these things in fear or contempt.

If we can, by a gross effort, imagine Mr. Henry Ford and the late William J. Bryan, and that bellicose and redoubtable man, Bishop Cannon of the Methodist Church, with the modest Mr. Wayne B. Wheeler, as Roman youths, in their togas of virility, attending a class held, say, by Mr. George Santayana; and if, holding the picture, we try to imagine and hear Mr. Santayana imparting his subtle, urbane, wise, and liberal spirit,—what he knows, feels, and is,—to the boisterous young Romans I have mentioned, evidently, the four of them would have none of his spirit. They have their own spirit, their own *dæmon*.

Mr. Ford would cry out in Latin of a kind, as he has already cried out in English of a kind, that he cares not ten cents for all the history that was ever written: 'History is bunk.' William J. Bryan would rush from the classroom, and, seeking the Forum, any forum, would make an oration against the late Mr. Darwin; and so with the others. For they are possessed, already, of a spirit of their own: the *dæmon* of false knowledge, of narrow, mean ideals; and that *dæmon* must be cast out before any good thing can enter them or those like them at the hand of even the most inspired professor. When I say that these gentlemen are possessed by *dæmons*, I am not trying to be funny, but to be exact, and, in an imaginative way, to convey the idea, none too easy of apprehension, that the American, possessing already his own notion of what he conceives to be a good life, has

the utmost contempt for the good life, which he knows nothing about and does not possess.

He labors, that is, under the false conception to which I alluded. He is a slave to error. He is an idolater of the bad. And the rest of us,—poets, novelists, and professors,—can go hang: we are a mere minority. Thus it is that in our country the poet, the writer or artist, and the professor feel isolated and solitary. They are face to face with this *Gallio* among the nations. America “cares for none of these things.” She cares for none of these things, because she has been decivilized. Historic events and a false ideal have brought us to that pass. We are, as a people, without the knowledge or practice of what, clearly enough, is civilization. And we are not aware of the fact.

But am I not rather taking the definition of civilization for granted? What is civilization? How do the authorities define it?

Well, the *Ladies' Home Journal* is, possibly, in a degree, and certainly intends itself to be, an agent of civilization. It should, therefore, be qualified to define civilization, or at least to point out a true and ideal civilization. And the editor, taking up just this issue in a recent number, writes as follows:—

“There is only one first-class civilization in the world to-day. It is right here in the United States. It may be a cocky thing to say, but relatively it [our civilization] is first-class; while Europe's is hardly second-class, and Asia's is about fourth- to sixth-class.”

It is comforting to know that such is the case. It disposes of so much. First of all, it relieves us of any effort to bring about a higher sort of civilization. Since we are so decidedly first-class, we may rest on the oars

of effort, and let France and England try to catch up. We may rest on our oars, or on our knitting-needles, and, suspended in the Heaven of our own superiority, look deliciously down on China, where family life is so detestably stable, and where the people have been innocent pacifists now these two thousand years or more.

It is pleasing, too, to feel that the French are not in it with us. Their family life, too, is irritatingly successful; and their women are at the same time so little regarded by their husbands, and by French law, that both by custom and under that law they are, we are told, practically partners in their husband's business affairs. And then, though we take little interest in such matters, it is certainly a pleasing thought, and one that fans our self-esteem into a cordial glow, to be made aware that our science and our music, two things which may have, we suppose, some relation to civilization, are on a plane above those of the French.

We don't know who our American Pasteur is, or who our César Franck is, but it's simply grand to know we have them. Further, it is nice to realize, from the highest authority, that England, through whom we inherited the language we speak, though not that refined bur-r-r which a few of us have implanted in the innocent thing, has at last sunk to second place, and can be regarded with complacent disesteem.

The word 'cocky,' the Dictionary informs me, is the same as 'cock-sure,' and signifies to be confidently certain; and the Dictionary adds that it is a 'low word,' which we now know not to be the case.—But the subject is serious, and irony gets us no further. Let us, then, say, as we surely must say, that such an extreme overestimate of what the people of our country have accom-

plished, in the way of creating a noble, fruitful, and humane life for themselves, is unworthy of any student of manners.

There is in such a comparative judgment and award nothing helpful or forwarding; no qualification is made, no distinction observed. It is as if a man should say that Athens and Florence in their great periods were less creative of human well-being than Newark and Yonkers of to-day.

I feel, however, that we can come by a less cocky, or less vainglorious, estimate of our American civilization by turning to the novelists, whose life-task it really is to deal with such matters. The editor of the *Home Journal* might naturally object to taking the opinion of mere men upon such a subject. He might argue that men know nothing about civilization or culture. Let me, therefore, appeal to a woman, that is, to *A Circuit Rider's Wife*, by Mrs. Corra Harris.

The book is an autobiographical sketch, written with a gusto, sparkle, and humor that should have recommended it to the higher critical appreciation. It treats, with much else, of our American life, as it was lived forty years ago, in the country districts of a Southern State. And in such districts, as we all know, life has not very much changed with lapse of time. There is much animation in the account of that life, and, rarest of things in a book by an American author, there is an extraordinary subtlety in what we are accustomed to call the psychology of the characters portrayed.

What is the nature of the life described? I think any reader of Mrs. Harris's book will agree with me when I say that the life is chill, sterile, sad and, above all, dull. In fact, it is dull with a dullness which surpasses any

dullness that this reader has ever encountered, save in just such countrysides. As, however, the narrative does concern itself with a backward people, and a Methodist community of that period, it might be felt, and reasonably so, that we cannot expect art, gayety, social diversion, or even human happiness in such a milieu.

Let me, then, turn to another woman writer, to Miss Willa Cather, for support. The excellence of her gift we all know. Whatever her novels may lack, it is certainly not truth, candor, or a knowledge of the people of whose existence she treats. In *The Song of the Lark* the author portrays the life led in a small town in Colorado; in *My Antonia* the current of things in a similar town in Nebraska. What here we have dealt with is not the aristocratic South, or the effete East, but the West; that portion of our empire where, as the popular song has it, everything is a little wider, warmer, larger, and more generous,—in short, happier.

Do we find it so? No; the life which the writer paints, or suggests, is divested of all the nobler pleasures; empty of intellectual interest; devoid of social diversion; artless, heartless, furtive, narrow, bleak, mournful, mean, and inhuman. Impossible to speak or read of it jocosely. Jest and irony die in their preconception. This is the American! To this he has fallen! We look in the magic glass, and the glass is truly magic with the grace and truth of genius, and we see our American brother's face. It is a very sad face, but not sad with thought; not furrowed by dark experience; not weary with having lived. No, the face, as it appears on this canvas, wears the mournful, baffled expression of a soul which does not know how to live, and has not lived.

It can only be said of these unhappy people that the

existence they are called upon to endure is composed of that iteration of nothing to which the human soul cannot accustom itself this side of an insane asylum. If Mrs. Corra Harris, and Miss Willa Cather report with only half truth the facts of our case, we must feel that we are in a bad way; that we really are a decivilized people, wanting in all the arts of civilization; and in consequence, undeveloped, starved of all that is best,—discontented, and dull. To this state our false conception of what is good has brought us.

The most thankless task in the world is that of telling our countrymen that anything whatever ails or is wrong with them. You are at once called a grouch, and a sour-belly. You are held to retard the wheels of progress. Why, then, undertake that which brings only an increase of disesteem and dislike, and to which little attention will be paid? As is well known, our national timidity shrinks from the task, or only essays it in the form of fiction, or when sure of sympathetic agreement. But, no doubt, the day will come when there will be American writers who shall be steeled to a just contempt of the disapproval of the great and ignorant mass of their fellowcountrymen. To those, in the future, must and will fall the task which truth imposes,—the task of criticism; the task of finding fault where fault should be found.

If the life our people lead is not good, but bad; if it is an existence which, by what it lacks, dehumanizes; if it tortures the young heart and cripples the youthful mind; if it is green and yet corrupt; if it is stupefyingly dull and empty of good; if it is mean, ignoble, and poor, we must face these facts, analyze them, interpret them if we can, and try to understand them.

In the sphere of religion Wycliffe and Luther were in

their day not remiss in pointing out corruption. And the poets, the novelists, of our time are their true sons, and should take heart of hope from the examples of those great Reformers, who first acquainted themselves with what was wrong, and thereafter reformed it. First, the weighing of facts, then their interpretation, and after that the more agreeable task of the betterment of what is bad. With us, in the Western world, reform is too frequently directed upon political evils only. Above all, it neglects the preliminary labor of the knowledge and understanding of the evil to be removed.

And again, our energetic spirit of reform wastes itself in the endeavor to raise the lowest and most unfortunate class a little, a very little higher.

But it is not the blind and the crippled, it is not the half-witted, or the nomad worker, with and in whom lie the destinies of America. To the exceptional boy or girl, to the gifted, to those who by the divine grace of high breeding in humble circumstances, are foreordained to some sort of leadership; to those to whom God has already given much, to them give yet more. Concentrate on the best you now have, and the wheels of progress will spin twice as fast as they now do. Cultivate your productive soil, and let the barren mountain pasture, or the marshland, wait a while. If this is unchristian, so much the worse for our modern Christianity. It was to this aim that Emerson dedicated his life.

But to do this, however inadequately, we must see clearly, as in the daylight of truth, in the very cruelty of it, those things in which American life is most wanting. And we must see that this absence of great and glorious things has not come about by chance, but is owing to our false conception of what is good, what bad;

and that this devaluation of good, this arid contempt of it, is the creative cause of all the wretchedness which so keenly affects us. We must seek to realize that this is the main cause why, in the midst of perfect tranquillity, and unparalleled plenty, we are neither contented nor happy. No doubt, other causes are at work upon us. But this is the Satan of our life. This is the Goliath of America. And against this giant power of evil, so deeply entrenched, so apparently unassailable, untouchable, the future American critic must throw whatever puny stone he may have in his sling. By thus doing, by destroying this dark misconception, we shall, at least in a measure, bring about the good life.

I may seem to some readers, at this point, to speak in hyperbole, and to be now as grotesquely extravagant in hope of the good, as I was earlier extreme in criticism of the bad. I may seem, too, to have advanced very inadequate proof that our life is not the most excellent one in the world.

I have mentioned Mr. George Santayana; let us listen to him. In his *Character and Opinion in the United States* he speaks of us Americans and of our life, at some length. He appraises our civilization, and culture, and analyzes our characteristics, without fear, with indeed much candor, but with esteem and affection. In his Preface, he writes: "I am confident of not giving serious offense to the judicious, because they will feel that it is affection for the American people that makes me wish that what is best and most beautiful should not be absent from their lives. . . . There is, in America, a fund of vigor, goodness, and hope such as no nation ever possessed before." In America, "all is love of achieve-

ment, nothing is unkindness; it is a fearless people, and free from malice."

"This soil," he continues, "is propitious to every seed, but why should it not also breed clear thinking, honest judgment, and rational happiness?"

PURITANISM

THE false ideal of which I have spoken, the false conception of what really and truly is the Good Life has been brought upon us, and prevails, through the creed and temper of the Calvinistic Churches. To those Churches we owe much, no doubt. Puritanism has been a great power for good. I am the last man to undervalue what it has done, and, in a weaker way, is still doing. Above all else this faith has resulted in a Discipline. And all human beings need discipline, are ill off without it; indeed, they never come to their best selves, to their fullest development, without it. The Presbyterian Church remains to-day a great disciplinary power and the people of that denomination show plainly the effects of the severe training in mind and character which they receive at the hands of their family and church. The Baptists show nothing of the sort. But Puritanism, great and powerful influence for good, as it once was, necessary as it once was, has also done limitless harm and continues to do harm to-day. It damages the human soul, renders it hard and gloomy, deprives it of sunshine and happiness;—in short, it takes away from the soul its joy. The Creed, or say the temper which arises from it, wrongs us sadly even to-day. More than to any other single agency we Americans owe it to the Calvinistic philosophy that we have so little of the zest of life; that our social life is so meager. Calvinism has wrought upon us and our forefathers in the

Past. It deprived them not only of their music, their ballads, songs and dances, but also of all that almost infinite mass of social activity and opportunity of happiness which goes under the name of Play, and which is vital to the soul of man, lest that soul fall into sorrow; into a barren and sad vacancy, and curse its own being. Man does not live by bread alone; neither does the soul by morals alone. It is not enough to the godlike soul to sing gloomy hymns or to dwell perpetually in the realm of a piety without joy, and frequently without mercy and kindness. It may be asked, it should be: "Is there, then, to be no more austerity, earnestness, discipline? Is the fear of God to vanish from amongst men?"

I can imagine a new, moral and intellectual Puritanism: a new and modern austerity; as austere as the old, as profoundly dedicated to discipline, as cruel to moral weakness, as wisely hard, and as demanding as the ancient form in its moment of greatest purity and power; but which should yet acknowledge and confess that no life is well-led without cheerfulness and natural pleasure. I can readily imagine such a modern, austere Discipline, connecting itself intimately with modern Science and bringing back into all our lives the grace, the charm, the gayeties, the glories, the human happiness, beauty and joy on which that earlier creed frowned, and which it abolished. Nor is this conception an imaginary picture.

A new, grave, and even tragic Puritanism has already sprung from the bosom of Science and stands ready to form, or reform, the whole modern world. On that reformation the future of Europe and America depends.

The human result of that early Puritanic abolition of good is best to be seen in a comparison between the North-

ern and Southern states. The Southern people has not been so stripped and denuded of the natural life; of opportunities for social meeting and social cheer, as has our Northern people. The men of the South have, to be sure, the Presbyterian Church; but fortunately that church arrived too late on the scene. The first settlers were already there, and had established their customs and way of life before this later creed could take hold. To this day the social approach of the Southern people, their ease and pleasantness in conversation; their ability and willingness to meet each other, to play games, laugh and be gay and amusing about next to nothing; in short, to lay hold of life and enjoy it with others, are infinitely greater than anything known in New England or the Northwest. They are a happier people and they show it. Is a happy life then nothing? Must we not say that to undervalue grace, gayety, the charm of elegance; to undervalue beauty of behavior, and a heart easily made glad, is to undervalue *life itself*; and, to be far too ready to assume that the Creator of Life desires that it shall be as near to the state of death as sadness, gloom, vacancy, awkwardness and a vain contrition, with unsocial habits, can bring it?

What do we wish, we who earnestly and even passionately desire the well-being of men? What is the *way* of that well-being, save that the many shall be able to possess themselves of the good life of the few? Take those families, then, in our country, which have inherited Colonial culture; whose children have been bred up in the stream of manners, habits, customs, learning, discipline and life which are the outcome, the fruit of that Colonial culture: families in which, whether wealthy or straitened in means, there has occurred no break, no

fracture of continuity. So, that in a measure, their children, when grown and mature, represent what can be accomplished and done with humanity when the Past perfects it. These families I speak of inherit opportunities of meeting; they inherit and are disciplined in all the ways which make it easy to be a little glad and show it. They are severely disciplined in the formal consideration of others; so that if they fail in that consideration they feel "sinful"; that is, they feel, if they have been coarse or rude, that they have been untrue to their *code*. Well, once more, all this is not nothing. Without forms of address, without some habit of approach to another human being, which shall be something less than suspicious or sharply hostile; without the spirit of consideration, human intercourse becomes something very close to the mutual shove, grunt and recrimination of swine in their pen. Even embarrassment is a poor basis for good cheer. Social timidity is a horrid thing; we are quite timid enough without expressing it. It lames us, renders us miserable and everyone else, too. Further, these educated and cultivated families sing, know how to sing, and thank God, they sing not merely some murderous anthem, with frequent reference to the blood of our enemies and may dogs lap it up; nor only some supercilious and saccharine-pathetic hymn which expresses the desire of its author to have done with labor, activity, love, friendship, life, and to pass mildly and gently away to another and easier mode of being;—to the bosom of some patriarch:—on whose bosom we can just lie back and do nothing and that forever. They sing, and though sometimes frivolous, their songs are more manly and moral, at their worst, than the sort of enervating hymn I refer to. And these people,—but we know them: we

know they dine, not merely feed, in company, as dogs do; they dance, they play games, they make the meeting of human beings a thing of importance; they entertain themselves innocently; they read; even, they read aloud; and, in a word, they are able to live a life which is in this sense, and in so far, the Good Life;—good in that it is necessary to the body, the mind and the spirit; for without some easy, cheap and natural enjoyment, men, I repeat, fall prey to that sickness of the soul which makes them desire not to be at all, or to get riotously drunk, or to be grossly dissipated; or, once more, to get out of it altogether and go to heaven and be done with it. I have said certain families, because this is precisely the case. There is no *class* of the sort described; or if there is one, it is small and as fluent as all our classes are. Moreover, we cannot take the class as a whole and consider it exemplary of a way of life which is truly good. We cannot because there are, within the class, subject to this Colonial culture, certain families which, alas, as we know too well, live in no such creditable fashion. One thinks of them with contempt or indignation. After all, to have inherited a vast intellectual, social, spiritual possession;—not to have come up from the soil and had laboriously to acquire it:—no, but to have it all given and placed in the hand,—the whole knowledge, wisdom, beauty, education and culture of Europe and the world; form, manner and custom showered upon you, and then, to make nothing more of it than some of us do,—nay, even, to live, as also some of us do, in a stupefying emptiness of mind, or in dissipation, or in concealed coarseness, and in these days not so very much concealed; or to turn all these good things

received, into an arrogant, stupid and vulgar display,—the gorges rise at it: Favored fools! Elegant Vulgarians!

Returning, then, solely to such families as live honorably and well, and in which the continuity of their humane inheritance is not broken, but, on the contrary, proceeds, so that one generation after another is fitted to serve the city, the state, or the country, in some form; these families are, inevitably, a source of civilization. They cause the Good Life to be known and admired. They spread it in example. What we wish for the mass of men, as I have said, is, that they, to whatever degree may be possible, should at least be able, be in a position to possess themselves of the good way of life which these happily situated families have inherited, and which they consciously and with reflection and the necessary discipline hand on to their descendants.

Though we Americans do not much think in terms of families, we shall presently perceive the need of this. Science will bring it about, and is so doing now. We speak because we think in terms of the individual. But in the last analysis the individual is no foundation for the state. A man and a woman;—that is, the Family produces men and women, not the individual man or the individual woman; and the Family produces them good or bad. Much of our general instability, half our crime and all the weakness of family life derives from this source, that the family is not considered:—the children are not. Only the individual as an individual; the husband, the wife; but not together, each singly. This is "Christian" as Christianity now stands and is. It is also anarchy, and extremely romantic. Cruel to the children and oblivious of the state.

Concluding the matter, it must be recalled that these

special families we are considering, represent a pre-Puritan culture. Their forefathers were not Puritan; or, if they were, their descendants chose to be less so. They chose something more humane. What they inherited, or what they made their own, was some portion of that earlier spiritual wealth which Puritanism was opposed to, and so largely destroyed; a wealth which we hope to see return to the world, and which is, indeed, on the way to returning. But, this Good Life is not confined to families which have inherited it. It is widespread, there are thousands of newly-risen families which live in this spirit. But these thousands are not enough for the civilization of the country. And there is a continual, a constant opposition to the pre-Puritan Culture and spirit in which they live: the opposition of the Calvinistic, and even of the Evangelical Churches. And, moreover,—it cannot be too often repeated,—we suffer from the great historic loss of the Good Life which followed, and forever must follow on emigration, and on an unsettled population of nomad habits. The loss of so much of what is necessary to a satisfying life, the loss of human culture, of liberal values, of the ways and customs of an earlier period; when social life, the sense of beauty and the enjoyment of music, nature, and poetry, flourished more freely than they do now, ought, I know, to be proven clearly, and in detail. Nothing would be easier, no task more grateful. But to do so would lead too far afield. Instead of a given proof, with its details of our meager and sad American life, I will ask the reader to give me the benefit of his good will, and to recall for himself some one house or hamlet, or whole village, where the people lived poorly and eat miserably, despite our American profusion: soil, climate and machinery. Where they

talked little and read nothing; or, newspapers, or Hearst's magazines. Where they had no intellectual interest and no family prayers; and neither had they Wine, Women and song, in any other sense than corn whiskey, noise and prostitution. And neither had they the slightest love of Nature. Love of it? Perception of the splendors and glory of the earth, of mountain, meadow, river and hill, and all the mutable changes which light in its course brings on these? No more perception of it than their dog, or their ox!— A family, or a whole set of families, where there was neither science, nor art, nor knowledge of history, nor even games; no, not even fishing for catfish with a worm; where the rifle had been discarded; where there was no hunting, and no riding and they could not swim; where music was a jewsharp and their one joy, their one hope, the one excitement that saves them body and soul from falling to the level of their own herd: The Methodist Revival Meeting! Or it may be a Seventh-Day Adventist one. "But, is that not enough?" I know many Baptist, many Methodist ministers; honest, pious and manly men; and not one have I ever known, who thought it half enough.—And again, my reader, lending me further of his good will, can recall to his mind, I feel sure, families of suburban habitat and middle-class incomes, who, despite their car, their clothes and their cleanliness, are not a whit better off than these country folk we have been trying to portray.

Surely, this is the worst of American life;—though it is not all the worst. If one should desire to know further in the matter, to hear a more drastic indictment of our people and state of affairs, far more unmerciful than mine, he has only to move about amongst the more thoughtful young men of the universities. I am not

agreed with many of those young men. I wish that I were. But they will easily tell any one what they think of the civilization and culture of our country. They are candid about it and plainer-spoken than I can well be. And their criticism has value. For young men, compared with their elders, are less timid; less in the irons of the possession of property; less dependent on the protection the police afford; and, too, are frequently wiser because they are more free, and do not know so much.

Before turning to the positive and constructive, the thing to be done, let me say plainly, that when we fasten our attention on our own people, we must exercise the utmost care in this that we should not ascribe to ourselves, to our brothers, some vice, deficiency or error and think it uniquely American, when, indeed, it is common to all humanity. For where or when were all men kind, wise, liberal, human, generous-hearted, happy and, in short, perfect? We must recall with the Shorter Catechism, that the human heart is desperately depraved;—that men the world over cheat, lie and spill their brother's blood; and that folly has not departed from amongst mankind, because we have electric lighting and the Ford car.

We are, indeed, very apt to tax our American brother or sister with some fault which is as general and as common to all men as the inability or unwillingness to embrace a new idea. Let us then take this counsel and not care to find too much fault with ourselves.— We may, indeed, wisely call to mind the story of that little girl, in, I forget, what Western State. She was a Presbyterian little girl, and brought up to think herself properly sinful and not to blink this matter. So that on one occasion it was natural that her minister should tell her to put down

on paper all her sins and infirmities, which she did, and presented the following list to his consideration: "I am a liar. I am a thief. I am a backbiter. I am unkind. I delight in cruelty, especially pinching. I am greedy, covetous, lustful, of a depraved heart, utterly without love of my Saviour, and in all things bitterly opposed to the will of God, my Father."

WHAT IS NEEDED

"The country is going to the dogs; to the absolute dogs; nothing is the way it should be; everything goes from bad to worse; we shall reach Nadir."

"I thought it was Gehenna," said his wife.

"It's no joke; the people are all going to the deuce."

"Well," said his wife, "what's to be done about it?"

—"Celestial Colloquies."

WHAT, in America, we should do is plain enough: and fortunately, it is being done. The women of the country, on whom so much depends; who are in such large measure the source of social melioration, these women are everywhere active in the way of building up a better life. Better, in this sense, that it shall be more wisely led; with less avoidable sickness, less dullness, less crime; and, though retaining the discipline and life of the home, shall yet not want for social pleasure. America owes her women a great debt for the energy they display in these their efforts to create a finer life for those they can reach; but it must not be forgotten that in the past, woman has been the great socializing force. It is never enough for women that there shall be iron bridges, or railroads, or well paved streets; these things belong to the civil State; but something more is needed; and that something is the socialization of manners, which is to say, customs.

But to mention the good work of others is not sufficient. It might be said, it will be, "you attack your own

countrymen; you say they are in a bad way. What, in your opinion, is to be done about it?"

The well-being of a hundred million people cannot be dealt with in a few plain words. Something can be said; the main troubles broached,—but the reader must call to mind that this is a practical matter and of an endless complexity. To go, at once, to the point: our people are, in general, not as robust as they ought to be. Our farmers cannot compare in health with the French or German peasant; and their women are worse off than the men themselves; living, as of course they do, the would-be refined, indoors life of the kitchen and parlor. This is where we should begin. Whether in the country or town is of no moment. We can begin if we like on Market Street, Philadelphia, where you will see hundreds or tens of thousands, even, of sickly looking, pallid boys and youths; and of miserable, frail looking girls with no color under the paint, and apparently no constitution. Or you can take that wickedly neglected, degenerate and diseased class, the poor whites of the South. But here and with health is where we should begin, for as an army goes on its stomach, so does a people.

It must not be forgotten that the people themselves are incapable of mending this matter. It is a matter of common experience, that any village or any countryside, which has not in it a lawyer, a mayor, a clergyman, or some other such person of trained mind and disciplined character, is in a state of declension. Its inhabitants fall out of touch with the forces of the modern world. The mending of their bad state must come from those who are more happily situated; from those who possess, or themselves are something, and can hand that "something" down. This handing down good things, this

building up of the mass of men by their superiors is the process of civilization; it is the melioration of the state of man; it is culture, hygiene, religion, life,—everything good. That it should take place freely, one thing is necessary: namely, that those who have *attained*, shall pass on to others their attainment, as did John Wesley, or Darwin, or the Earl of Shaftesbury, or Lincoln, or as a thousand obscure ministers of the gospel do daily in their more restricted sphere.

We may respect, honor and love the "plain people" of our country, but if we imagine that they, of themselves, can remedy the gross defect of their social existence, we imagine a vain thing. They must look to those more fortunately situated for help: to those who have gained knowledge, and who live in the exercise of reason. And even these qualifications are insufficient. For, the favored few must be fearless, and free; and, living rationally, they must care for human beings; be indignant when they see them rot, and urged on by the passionate desire to share with the indigent and needy what they themselves possess so abundantly: whether it be health, or food, or the joy of life, or Science, or the sense of God's power and presence.

These are the true Aristocrats: the Caretakers, Leaders, Shepherds of the people. Without them a nation perishes. "Feed my sheep," said One, and if I mistake not, it was said twice.

The wish to better the state of men, whether it be spiritual and ardent, as in St. Francis, or practical and composed, as in Franklin, is the sign in the man who feels it, that he is one of the Givers; whether he dispense Religion, or Law, and liberty; or give soup to the starving. He cares for men, and not as one coldly and pro-

fessionally charitable. This care for others was the passion which possessed Theodore Roosevelt, and of which his sense of justice was a part. The same passion held Washington and Lincoln alike to their tasks. All three men were greatly, personally ambitious; but all three were actuated by this sentiment. It was their main motive and by it their ambition was kept pure and impersonal. I believe the late William J. Bryan, of whom hitherto I have said only unkind, even if true, things,—I believe Bryan felt this feeling in no inconsiderable degree. That Henry Ford feels and is actuated by it, is evident to the least observant.

We must try to feel about our fellow men as these men did or do. We should never rest,—and our women will not rest—until our prosperous country can boast that its farmers, mechanics, handworkers, its clerks and its “white collar” men, they and their women are as robust as any in the whole world. Of course, and once more, this means the disuse of the frying-pan; a revolution in cooking; and possibly port-wine, or something like it, for millions of families. It certainly means air and sun for our women; and some sort of work, not in the hot kitchen. If they cannot play tennis or golf,—and few of us have time,—can their silly scorn and horror of working out of doors not be reft from or reasoned out of them? I can only say that, at this present, the American farmer’s wife and daughter is too often a bitterly sad, a tragic and miserable sight.

Let me repeat and insist: cooking comes first. On that everything is based. No national culture is possible without it. No religion is safe without it. If the cooking is bad, the religion will get sick. After that comes, as I have said, work in the open air. If that be impos-

sible, as it is to those who dwell in cities, they must play games. And if men of great means do not provide the wherewithal for these youths and girls to play,—the wherewithal to purchase space, and turn it into playgrounds,—then, Heaven pity them, for their accession to wealth has not been accompanied by a corresponding growth of the sense of the grave privilege which wealth confers. “Noblesse oblige. Richesse oblige.” Such wealthy men are in the boots of the older aristocracies. Let them not have less of the honorable passion of caring for others. Exercise in the air, games for the exhilaration they afford: these things we all need, unless we are happy in our farm work, or in driving the engines of an express train, or laying bricks, or reaming steel.

But above and beyond these primordial needs, men must have a social life. They need opportunities for meeting, and when they meet, good will, and something to do. Give them music,—not played to, or at them; not, as it were, sprayed over them, but played or sung by themselves. They need songs, and the dance; and, if cards they cannot have, give them every other sort of game you can think of. Jackstraws is infinitely restoring to a weary body and empty mind. And give them, again, if you can find how to do it, that solid, simple, satisfying love of nature, which their forefathers had; their Irish, or Saxon, or Danish forefathers: barbarous Pagans, lost to decency, murderous, cruel, not clean; but, in this respect, miles ahead and above these their descendants, whom modern Science and religion have united to deprive of this unspeakable satisfaction. Give them Nature again, and let them know,—I care not what words are used,—that she is holy, significant; the Mother

of them and of all things; and,—that she is cruel, adverse, hard and must be dealt with accordingly. These two views of nature are not separable. They cannot be separated. The facts are against it. Only sentimental poets separate them. Further, let the people have their plays and their poetry again. What is gone, what the black and blind austerity, the illiberal and wicked passion of the Calvinistic movement swept into a cruel oblivion, cannot be recovered. But let them use what there is: anything, even things of doubtful taste,—vulgar, or common, or not rigidly moral,—are better than nothing. If the songs are a little “rough,” with coarse words, or what not, they can be cleaned up later, as Burns cleaned them up in his time. The point is, that in the imaginative Arts, you must not ask people who are not from childhood trained in, and conversant with these things to admire,—to have a good time with the works of Edmund Spenser, or Milton, or Whitman, or Wordsworth; or to gape at the Sistine Chapel; or listen with deaf minds to Bach and Haydn. Lead them to something simple; powerful, direct; which they can understand; and let them enjoy it in their own way. The same thing applies to games and all else. One of the advantages of the Sixth Readers, say, of fifty years ago, was that the verses and prose extracts were not too good, not too high. I mention this as being suggestive of a way to begin with people. But we all know by experience that it is a hard task to reinstitute the satisfaction in nature, the passion for poetry, and the unstrained delight in music, into a people which has lost these things; or is accustomed to them only in connection with religion. But, it can and must be done. To do it requires time, tact, imagination, money and self-sacrifice.

In the meantime, let us remember that social meeting is the very first of all the pleasures which men have in this life. From the social side of our nature springs government, constitutions, the Arts, the drama, poetry, and the dance. Man wearies of himself. We cannot always be in the "movies." And many a splendid boy or girl, who has no turn for poetry, cares nothing whatever for Nature, hates painting, loathes sculpture, and can hardly whistle a tune, is yet, or may be, gifted in a social way. May have a perfect genius for meeting others; for good-fellowship; for talk and fun. Such an one has a genius for living in the immediate moment. He forgets himself easily. His spirits rise easily. He likes human beings; and they adore him. When he is around, everyone is happy and at ease. Such a boy is a perfect God-send to the whole community. He liberates everybody near him, inspiring them to be themselves as he is himself.

Social meetings, the opportunity for these, then, is the central reform. Let the young people first learn to play games. Presently, they will learn to talk to each other; and with this everything begins. But there is one thing more to be done, and the importance of it is little appreciated. We must try to bring up our children to be contented, and even delighted with *little things*. Little in the sense of costing nothing; accessible things; things of frequent occurrence. We should bring them up to enjoy every moment, every person, every word, every new thing, every fresh incident, and every old thing, too. It is this spontaneous delight in common pleasures, easily to be had: in a game of marbles or dominoes; in a banjo; in flying kites, playing tag, or in the use of tools and machinery; or in fishing, shooting, riding, or what not

else, that makes the real essential difference between man and man. I will be frankly personal and confess that I would not have missed living on a farm, as a child, and having learned all that is done on a farm: the care of cattle, and milking; the care of a horse; cradling, threshing, sowing, feeding pigs, and all the rest,—not for all the other and less vital education derived from books, which I have made, or may not have made my own.

Contentment with little things is necessary, for there are few big things, and of these still fewer are attainable. We must be content with the frequent and the common. And why not? The best things are not some rare and expensive entertainment. We go to many such and they are often so dull we wish we were swimming in almost any creek, or taming a team of oxen, or pitch-forking dung upon the field.

It may be asked, and the question is pertinent: "Why not morals? Why not the spiritual life? Why not the worship of God? Why not the bliss and the quietness, the moral sweetness of life in the home?" The American people is a moral people already; none more so, and save the English, none half so much so. They live, and in some measure, they practice the spiritual life. Any one who does not know this, does not know our people. The people themselves are more deeply religious than the Churches; more religious, in the deeper sense of the word, than most of the clergymen and ministers who exhort them to religion and morality. There is nothing wonderful in this. The people, in the same way, are wiser, politically, by far than the most of our politicians or political writers. No doubt their spiritual life lacks something. But they are not devoid of religion. They

worship God, and if unwisely, who shall say that he worships God wisely? At all events, religion lies at the foundation of their ideals, and habits, and morals.

When it comes to the pleasures of home, I am all for them. I know nothing even half as good. Family life is the most satisfying and repaying thing on earth. It combines all the opposites: care, trouble, anxiety and performance of duty, with heaven knows what deep contentment, what joys, what solid satisfactions! And, above all, it is, as almost nothing else is, *continuous*. The child is born, grows; its needs increase and vary. And every new child is a new person, a new hope, a new outlet and refreshment of the spirit. One could write about family life forever, but is the praise of it necessary? Would it not be a little like exclaiming in ecstasy over the air we breathe or the pleasure of sleep?

In any case, family life and the pleasures of the home must not confine and keep us in a narrow circle of five or six people. So that save for church on Sunday, we speak to no one save the family. This is a dull and dulling thing. It detains us from the world of men, whom, it may be supposed, God has created for some purpose. This home business can be done to death. Let us have all the "home" in the world, all the intimacies, interests and gayeties, all the familiar words, and all the affection, duty, discipline and enjoyment of the home, but let not these detract from or destroy all social converse.

And, to conclude these necessarily rough and hasty words, to conclude with what should be done: Let those nobler men and women among us who have the well-being of their countrymen warmly at heart, perceive and realize that what we all lack is not a new Amendment, or

fifty of these: is not even purer politics, or abler politics, or more politics: referendums, and the like; that what we lack is not Bolshevism, or some other charming theoretical system, which shall save and make us whole. We do not need these things, and we certainly cannot ask for more prosperity than we have. What we need, is to be *recivilized*. We need national Culture. The human soil is rich but produces too little: too little happiness. Too little of what is various and great in character and intellect.

It was said to a Kentuckian: "Down here in Kentucky, you have three thousand dollar horses and fifty cent boys." What we need is to perfect our human beings, not by main force, not by "lawing" them to death; rather by a gradual, laborious and, of course, a very slow process of such self-development as shall make them capable of happiness and contentment. The spirit of contentment is not a weak and ridiculous thing. When coupled with ambition, it is an immense power. When it merely follows on intellectual recognition, it delivers and saves us. Neither is the capability of happiness nothing. We train it too little. We make too little of it. See the difference in men! One man is never glad, never satisfied. And neither is his wife. Millions of money, idleness, servants, Packards, balls, houses, hotel friends and hotel luxury; opportunities of travel,—and what happens? They take their motor car to Europe; and the rest is *speed*.

They and their poor little undisciplined son go paying and pining from one country to another;—on they whirl, seeing nothing and complaining of everything. And the son, poor boy, with his little nose in the air, flabby and sick with being carted about Europe like a bag of goods,

sees three Englishmen, former officers, one of them wealthy; one a well-known statesman; the third a great tiger hunter. And the three are walking in the Alps, knapsack on back and staff in hand. Says the American boy to his father's acquaintance in the car, "Why do your British friends walk? Are they so poor they cannot ride? Do you mean to say they walk for fun? They must be fools."

Sailors are happy men. With what? Why, they have three masts, a number of ropes, hard labor, poor food and the deadly monotony of the dismal ocean. What makes the hunter happy? Hardship, difficulty, the air and earth. And what of a man who is happy plowing and reaping, or milking cows, or chopping wood? His seems a hard case to some people. "The poor dog has to earn his bread in the sweat of his brow. Horrible!" But myriads of him are well-contented, happy and will tell you so. If these men are satisfied with the life they lead, are happy, or can be when happiness falls on them,—what shall we say of the man who, in good health, in his maturity, not beaten down by ill fortune, is disappointed, discontented, sullen, dull, heavy and blank in mind, and without that joy which I shall forever insist is the birthright of every man, and the very air his spirit breathes, and must breathe or perish.

THE CHURCH

MUCH is being done, but unfortunately, the most of what is being done to bring about a better life applies only to the city. The countryside is harder to reach. No doubt, as the towns and cities make a better life for themselves, this movement will spread to the village and farm. But in the countryside, the Church is the most powerful organization for betterment. Accordingly, it must be hoped that the Church shall come to perceive that a new and richer life is necessary for the people, if they are not to starve in the midst of moral, intellectual and social plenty; and will initiate the reform so much needed. Their Master's life is before them. Whatever may be said of that life, it was not restricted to the home; it was not ascetic; not led and lived in a gloomy, sour and forbidding spirit. To say the least, the precepts of Jesus are not prohibitive of enjoyment; and till the last, it was a life lived socially amongst men, women and children. I refrain from speaking further to the point. There are those who are qualified to speak, but, let them say and let them act.—For my part, having known ministers of many denominations, I can readily conceive that it will be actually and only at their hands that the better life will come about. The great revolutions are silent. They neither rend nor tear. The old leaf is extruded by the pushing out of the new leaf. And such a silent revolution is now being accomplished. The winter-withered leaves will fall and the new green appearing, we shall say, "It is springtime, the time of joy."

APOLOGIA

LIFE, when we are are not asleep, may be said to be one happening after another. There is, or appears to be, little logic in what from hour to hour befalls us,—it is all tolerably inconsecutive, random, and unrelated. The only apparent or important connection in things is that they happen to us, and the only meaning they seem to possess is that we give them.

Reading our morning paper we come on the name of the President of the Bank of England; and, recalling the stock from which he springs, are amused: how did he ever inherit, or acquire, annex, take on, or draps himself in such a name? Smiling, and reflecting on this, we walk gayly down the street, and the earth under our feet begins to grind and groan, to undulate, and shake itself like a wet dog: an earthquake is in process, and we are face to face, not with Mr. Montagu Norman, of the Bank of England, but with sudden death.

Or, on some walk, we pick up a gray feather from the grass. What bird dropped it? And, perhaps, at the same time, our shoe pinches us. Why should it, when we paid the man such an exorbitant price? An hour later we meet an acquaintance who coming towards us with a long face, we rally him on his melancholy:—what's he so blue about? and yerking him playfully in the ribs, he blurts out the news of our father's sudden death. On the same evening we receive a long-delayed and long-desired letter from our son, and are overwhelmed with joy. The following morning we hear of

the discovery of a new element, and just afterwards, the convulsing question is suddenly put to us: whether, in order to keep her, shall we lie to the cook about the chore-man's temper; or shall we not? What logic, connection, meaning and ultimate cosmic significance have these things? The aristocratic name, bird's feather, seismic tremor, ill-fitting boot, unexpected decease of a parent, a deep personal desire gratified, a new element, and the moral problem presented by the cook? They are all random strokes of the world we live in, and, why think, why bother about them?

But possibly we do bother; we permit ourselves the luxury of reflection upon these problems, occurrences or phenomena, and if we do, presently a Spirit within us, for which we have no name, but which we may call the consciousness, intellectual and moral,—this Consciousness declares to us the significance of what we have pondered upon. It may relate the matter under consideration to the rest of life, to the sum of experience; or it may merely tell us what meaning it has for us. This Judge and Arbiter of all realities is a fairly well known power, and has his ultra-modern and psychological name, or names. But taking him, or it, as if we had never read Ribot, or William James, we perceive, or know, or feel, that though seated within us, he is singularly apart from us. He appears to sit, or throne, invisible, in a serene region of our Being to which we have no access. He speaks without words. His countenance, though we see it not, we feel that it never alters. He has no share in the tumult of passion. The Stream of sensations, perceptions, even of ideas, flows, rushes on, but he is above the stream. He seems, as I have said, a Spirit or Judge who, from some remoteness within, witnesses, perceives,

weighs, considers and, in unruffled composure, as if he had no part or interest in all the distractions and confusions of our mutable, suffering souls, delivers his equable, moral judgment or his intellectual conclusion. He is incapable of an *obiter dictum*; incapable of all but Reason and Righteousness. But if, with our forefathers, we call him *Conscience*, we confuse his nature. For his comment upon moral action, or the want of it, is in the highest degree unconventional. His silence, which is frequent, appears to acknowledge the necessity of tribal morality. But when he speaks, or rather when we are aware that he has spoken, the announcement is always in the sense of declaring to us that we have violated the harmony of our own nature. Intellectual Error disappears in his presence as shadows do in the rays of the sun. It cannot be said that he throws out a Generalization. But, having gone to sleep in a state of obfuscation over this or the other experience, we often wake with the generalization floating in the air of the mind. It appears to be his word. The man in whom he is least active is one who is willful. And, I suppose, when we say that a man has a "highly experiential" nature, aside from the implied comment on his sensory apparatus, we mean that he is habitually receptive of, and open to the verdict of this judge. Perhaps, then, we should think of our moral, spiritual and intellectual being, not as something creative, but as passive receptivity, as pure vision, or impartial audition, and that those men, whether artists or poets, philosophers or saints, who possess this exquisite, reverent, upward-looking and self-delighted receptiveness, that these men owe the most of what they are or do to this, their inborn attitude and gift.

But, when this singular and sublime judge, from whose

verdict there lies no appeal, deigns to provide us with a generalization, we, if we are one sort of man, straightway forget the concrete experience, or instance, which we had, so to say, presented to the consideration of the Court, and thereafter treasure only the generalization handed down.

It is this habit which makes many deep writers dull. For evidently it is not the business or intention of this sublime Being within us to arouse interest. He is not like a playwright, whose aim is to create *suspense*. He has no story to tell, like a novelist, and no humor or wit, nor does he ever employ metaphor in the manner of the Poets. His prose-style is limited, for his vocabulary is confined to the two words: "good, bad." Though, as I have said, no words are heard, one or the other of these is felt, or opined, or perhaps there is, simply, an irradiation or sunny warmth of encouragement: as if a Voice had said, in golden tones, and almost smilingly, "Now you are nearer the Truth,—you are getting warm." In short, His intellectual generalizations or discoveries, and His moral commands or assents are beautifully and miraculously *there*, like a Rainbow after rain.

But, as this nameless and impersonal Person deals with ultimate Reality only in the manner I have described, it is, often, as well for us who think and write in the hope that one or two may read us, to narrate the experience, rather than hand out this,—His, or our,—abstract, derivative conclusion. This was Shakespeare's habit, and is that of the modern or wiser novelists. These sons of the epic Bard tell a story in which there is concealed some experience of their own. The story may seem trivial, and of little import, but in any case, the one hearing or reading it, being himself possessed of that

inner Oracle of which I have spoken, can quickly draw the moral, or other conclusion. Plato is said to have, in a measure, followed this plan of procedure and not all wholly, not entirely to the end of enlivening a dull page.

A CONVERSATION IN VENICE

I CANNOT say I overheard the following conversation, for I was one of the two speakers, and a man cannot be said to overhear himself, or the person who addresses him directly. As I say, there were two of us sitting about a small iron table, in the soft, open air of the square of *San Marco* in Venice. It was a summer evening, after dinner, and we were going to the theater to see a play of Goldoni's. The twilight was long and lovely; there was the usual crowd: men and women strolling up and down, taking the air, observant of each other, pleasantly idle, enjoying the cool of the evening. There were few foreigners. Now and again a German, or Englishman could be seen. And presently one of us said, "There comes an American." And to be sure, passing close to our table his language bewrayed him. "How did you know he was American, while he was still at a distance?"

"By his walk."

"Oh,—impossible."

"Why impossible?"

"Because a man's walk, what does that tell you about a man? Not his nationality, not even his character."

Thereupon one of the two of us addressed the other in the colloquial and with something of asperity:

"The trouble about you is, that though God has given you powers of observation, you do not use them. You do not, because you do not believe in *Form*; in the vital significance of *Form*. In the fact, as plain as the nose

on anyone's face, that Form means something. A man's way of walking is dependent on his build. This, first; and, then, his way of walking paints a picture of something within; it reports, portrays, corresponds to the inner man; and besides there is a deal of nationality in the way a man walks. In our country, he must not walk with an assured and proud air, looking always beyond and past anyone who comes towards him, as the Englishman does. Our people do not like that. They say, why can't he walk and behave like us? And with us walking, like talking, or the conduct of life, is not an art. It just happens; you have legs, you walk. Walking is just picked up and done anyhow, as a man plays the piano or becomes a great painter."

"That sarcasm of yours gives me a pain."

"You must learn that form, as well as habits and customs, has significance. Now, it doesn't mean anything to you that that man sipping a 'sirop' has a long crooked nose, and that his features are all at war with one another, as if they had been bestowed out of a grab bag; and, yet, you must know, that as the features are, in their interspacing and relation to each other, so is the man's build: so are his lungs, heart, kidneys, lights, liver and bowels, all spaced and inter-related. That man cannot live long. That man's internal organs are jumbled up like his features. And you do not think it means anything that that older Italian woman, the one with that charming head-dress,—see her move her hands,—what beautiful, competent hands with blunt fingers so well covered,—and just see the grace of every movement!—does grace, think you, signify nothing? And look, look! That Venetian working girl,—the one crossing the square diagonally,—wearing the black Venetian shawl with the fringe, and remark how she wears it! She's

straight as a young poplar, and self-contained, because she is in public. And what dignity, what pride in her carriage! No heels, no paint, no powder! You can be assured that under her black shawl she wears an old cheap gown. The shawl is her pride. You think it all means nothing. Well, I will not argue with you; I will simply inform you. The way that girl carries herself in public; her walk, her dignity, her erectness, the way she keeps her eyes to herself: those things are a tradition, handed down. The shop girls of Venice imitate the carriage and all else of the great Venetian ladies of five hundred years ago. That is, they imitate the imitation. Half the history of Venice is in that girl's walk and carriage."

"Oh come on and feed the pigeons!"

We strolled over and fed the intolerable birds. But the heart, or at least the mind of the speaker, was hot within him, and he continued:

"My dear man, everything means something. The thumb of a new-born idiot turn into the palm. Men's faces are tell-tale. But, not to you! To me they are an open book." Here, the silent participator in the conversation sniffed. "And so with nations of people. You want to know your own country, and you certainly do not know it;—but if you want to get a notion of what we are like, why, it is perfectly discoverable. It comes out in everyone, everywhere. It is not something subtle and hidden. Take the daily Press, or the last election in Pennsylvania, or Broadway in the evening, or the Best-Sellers, or take Comedy. You get the taste of the American public,—just as with Goldoni you get the taste of the time of——"

"Oh, let's get a gondola and be pushed over to the theater! Who was Goldoni, and make it short!"

COMEDY AND THE AMERICAN SPIRIT

IT has been said that the only reason for a man's taking a wife is that without one life is too untroubled. And so, perhaps, the only good reason for a playwright's taking to the lecture platform is that if he throws himself into that dreadful vortex, he will be asked troublesome questions, and regarded with contempt if he can't answer them.

Some years since, lecturing, for the first time, on the drama, to a class of university students, I made record, with no little interest, of the many questions asked me. The class was not small, many outsiders coming in for one reason or another, and accordingly, I rather flattered myself,—that is, at the go-off,—that I was doing very pretty work, reading *Hamlet* and Aristophanes in a semi-original translation, and commenting on both in my own vein. It is agreeable, and by no means difficult, to be pleased with oneself. There seemed no cloud on the horizon, no storm approaching. But one day (it was after the third lecture), a student of the university, a rosy young woman, came up, and used the fatal phrase: "I don't see why."

"I don't see why Hamlet made such a fuss about his mother's marrying his uncle. Why shouldn't she have?"

A fine-looking, athletic, tow-headed young man, emboldened no doubt by the first questioner's presence, then approached me and said:

"I think Romeo and Juliet were a pair of dubs: Why weren't they?"

These were the first large, heavy drops of the approaching storm, and presently it broke in a downpour, a hard hail of queries.

"What is Comedy? Why do you dislike the newer drama?"

"Well, see here, Professor, is High Comedy just a description of the goings on of rich people, and if so, why 'High'? What is Low Comedy, anyway?"

"Why do you say realism is dead and done with? We thought realism was the last, best thing."

"We wish you would explain, and *clearly*, why you think the American people do not like what you call 'pure' Comedy."

"People in real life don't talk poetry: so why the 'poetic' drama?"

"When a brick falls on a man's head and knocks him out, you say it isn't dramatic. I'd call it dramatic, believe me!"

If I had, now, to answer these questions, I should, I think, begin by saying: a play is a rational dream, dreamed waking and of purpose, for the pleasure of it. And, hoping to avoid the guilt of a formal definition, I should say, further, that just as Tragedy is something partial, something composed in a special mood, so, too, is Comedy. True, the writer of tragedies may introduce the comic element into his play, but he will see to it that these scenes shall not be alien to the mood he writes in, and the feelings he wishes to arouse. And the writer of comedies, may, and often does, verge upon the tragic; but, in a general way, he, too, will seek to be true to the comedic conception of life, and the tone which follows upon that conception: in short, he likes his dream to be not only rational, but also harmonious within itself.

Comedy, when the spirit of it is pure, is then, the product and fruit of a special mood; something partial and particular; a certain temper and way of thinking and feeling evoked in certain men at a certain time by the spectacle of life, or by as much of it as at that moment they choose to look upon. I suppose it may be best put in this way, that the comedic mind takes it that nothing is final, irretrievably wrong, hopelessly and helplessly bad. There is, it asserts, no despair, no death; or, if there is, it is a good despair, a friendly and desirable death. There is, in short, no possible posture of affairs but admits of a good outcome. And Comedy has no hesitation about the means we should employ in order to remedy a bad state of things, insure the good outcome, and let the curtain fall on it. A little virtue and common sense is the means, the cure-all. A slight degree of moderation, of prudence, a little ordinary and even cool kindness or good will; not to be a ramping egoist: not to be stone-blind to the fact that there are others in the world: this is all that is needed to make men happy.

Supposing, for the fun of it, that I am right in these not inconsiderable assertions, that is, that Comedy, when not adulterate; not, for example, timid, tasteless and middle-class in temper, or not of a duplex mood, weeping copiously for the worst of reasons; or not merely a rollicking horseplay; suppose, I say, that Essential Comedy is the voice and expression of something purely rational: and that her virtues, which she regards as moral hygiene for all the follies of life, are pagan virtues, as they clearly are,—how, then, will the American regard this very rational Comedy? Will he be pleased with it? Will he take to it, as long ago he took to "The County Fair,"

or to that play which was so entertaining, the play "Turn to the Right," of Mr. Winchell Smith?

Of course, when I ask will the American take to it, as he took to these things, I mean will he find his own ideals expressed in it, will it be to his taste? I am constrained to believe that it will *not* be to his taste, and that he will feel inclined to look askance at it, as at something alien to the spirit of his Americanism, and therefore antipathetic. He will do this in the face of Pure Comedy for the simple reason that its way of looking at life is rational and nothing else. Whatever solution it offers for the evils of our lot, is, therefore, a purely rational solution, and necessarily, the virtues it extols are purely pagan. He will feel and say to us, "If common sense and moderation are all that are needed, Christianity is impugned. There is another Way of Life: a better way. The rational way, the way of moderation. And, this won't do. It won't do, because it isn't the truth." If we go about to jeer and make light of this attitude of the American mind, we are in the infancy of culture. What we should rather do is to note the fact, and find out what bearing it has.

Looking at the thing in this way, it may be asked, where do we meet such Americans? Of course, nowhere, and yet everywhere. America is not merely a geographical boundary. America is a spirit; the spirit of a certain race and culture. I know how much in certain circles this idea is, at present, disrelished. The Egyptian and Syrian arrive here, and naturally it is their country. "What is this American stuff? Who are Americans, and why do they have a special spirit? America," they say, "is an international union. As for Anglo-Saxons, Nordics

—but why speak of them? They are going the way of the bison. The land will be ours, and is now.”

Israel Zangwill, the well-known Jewish author, recently deceased, felt much in this way, and, accordingly, when, some two or three years ago, he was in this country, spoke to us about ourselves with what one could only feel was a truly Roman assurance and solemnity;—much as a Roman Consul might have spoken to the ancient, uncivilized and painted Britons.

Zangwill spoke or wrote thus to our Americans in No. 652 of the Julius-Haldemann Booklets. One thing within our borders which irritated him to utterance was the Ku Klux Klan. It seemed to him to be unAmerican. And as he was an internationalist living under the protection of the British flag, and had spent some months in this country, he felt that he knew what true Americanism was; or ought to be; knew the American spirit; and accordingly he instructed us, not without the Roman air of authority I have mentioned, to the effect that we should not think of America as a nation, but as a continent. And he indicates to us that we must dismiss from our minds the false and ridiculous notion that we are a race, a people, with our own culture, our own ideals; for, we are, evidently, nothing more than many races and peoples thrown together on one continent. He concludes by fervently begging us to qualify our independent nationality, and altering the Constitution, to embrace internationalism. In doing which things, he tells us, we shall be true to the American spirit.

We who were born and bred here are a little disinclined to listen very long to these excellent internationalists, and their conception of what we ought to think, feel, be and do. We know pretty well who and what we are, and

what we want. We know the American spirit. We know it, because we have breathed it in from the earliest years; and sometimes even later in life, we feel called upon to criticize and oppose it in certain of its manifestations. But we never doubt its existence. We know it is not international. We know it is the spirit of a people: our own spirit.

Americanism is, then, a spirit, and, as we all are aware, it is sometimes sentimental, cynical, and even other and less tolerable things. But, for our present and limited purpose, it is preferable to take the American spirit in its strength rather than in its weakness.

The ideas and habits of mind of our people, are, as I have said, Christian; deeply and prevailingly so. And this Christianity of theirs, is, of course, their strength. But, it is not their only strength; for, in certain regions of thought and activity they are not Christian, and yet are constructive and powerful. In order to shed some light on the matter, we might, I suppose, say that, save the so-called Friends, the Quakers, we are imperfectly christianized. Only compare other Americans with this pious people: for in them there seems to be no remnant or crumb of the original barbarian left. But with the rest of us, there remains a stark something of the Viking, or Saxon sea-robber; something as little Christian as the Bill of Rights, or Thomas Jefferson.

And thus it comes about, that, touching certain political, or moral matters, we are rational, and nothing else. In our feeling about these matters, we are cynical, pragmatic, indifferent to theory, and opposed to what we call idealism, opposed to any Christian solution of the problems presented.

The young students whom I quoted spoke in this ra-

tional or common-sense vein and their questions were elemental, and went to the root. For they were speaking in the fullness of their own American spirit. And never more so than when they said: "Why were Romeo and Juliet not a pair of dubs?"

Nothing could be more natural than for an American to think Romeo and Juliet a pair of dubs. Let us take it in this way: many of us have suffered the sad experience of co-education. Sad, for this herding together of the young bulls and the heifers is a great cooler-off. The edge of strangeness is dulled. The blue of the distance, it may be recalled, disappears when we approach the mountain. The mountain is then no more than a pile of rocks,—and all mountains are alike.

Thus, when our young man is thrown into the closest non-connubial intercourse with a lot of young women, seeing them hourly, and often when he would prefer not, and necessarily losing his male attribute of the pursuer, he presently finds himself indifferent. And after a year or so, his emotions becoming generalized, he becomes continually promiscuous:—I speak of a spiritual promiscuity. Romance, naturally, there can be none, for there is no surprise, no novelty, no fear, but only a highly accurate, and close-at-hand, inch-by-inch perception that women are not deep or mysterious things, differing by an entire inner world from men, but just people in a pool, or on a team, and often in the way.

It may be that Shakespeare, when he wrote "Romeo and Juliet," wished to justify co-education as a means of abolishing romance. For, clearly, "Romeo and Juliet" treats of the first love of those who have not been co-educated; of that sort of romantic first passion which is in itself an excess; and, as such, easily creates a

catastrophe. For Romeo didn't *like* Juliet. He didn't know her well enough to like or dislike her. He adored her,—nothing more intelligent. We Americans do not altogether believe in, or approve of, excessive and irrational adorations of anything; not even of young women. The cold rationality I referred to comes at once into play. But romantic passion is irrational or nothing. Well, the American regards the romance of it as silly; and the less said about the passion of it the better.

Thus co-education and our new and deliciously naked and photographed bisexual athleticism produce a Spartan state of affairs. The Spartans were no more romantic than they were honest. And so the American spirit, possibly not without wisdom, regards that famous two as a pair of 'dubs.' A Spartan would have regarded them in the same way.

Taking "Hamlet," there is no reason,—no American reason,—why the Queen should not marry her dead husband's brother the day after the funeral of her dead husband. She might defer the wedding out of a just regard to the opinion of mankind, but myriads of excellent and virtuous American widows defer nothing. From one bed they leap to the other. Americans being, as I say, in this matter rational, have no horror of a second love following hot-foot on the first. It would be otherwise if we had a respect for passion. But we lack this, and define our feelings by the special name we give it. If passion squares with the law, it is all right. If not, it is immoral. In the first case it is love: in the second, infatuation.

The consequences of this attitude are far-reaching and profound. The whole of our literature shows it. In view of that literature, and remembering what American ideals

are, it appears to me indisputable that the American spirit, whether Christian and mystic, or purely common-sense and rational, is not easily congenial to the "Tragic" or "Comic" of Europeans. If our people were less sterile in creative art, we should perceive this more clearly; the examples of our own American way of thinking and feeling would lie to hand. As in time, no doubt, will occur, when we shall have created more freely in our own image. All I wish to do, at this point, is to suggest, and try to make it clear, that when the untutored American mind comes upon the essentially tragic, or the essentially comic, they are not altogether to its taste, and why this is so. But any such generalization needs to be qualified.

The theater is a civic institution. And, in our larger cities, where this form of entertainment flourishes, the population being largely of foreign birth and breeding, views life as foreigners do or may. Accordingly, the plays of New York may at some future period attain popularity in that city, but fail of it in the country at large. The comedies of Congreve were relished only in the London of his day.

* * * *

But how much more, and more winning and delicious, there is in Comedy than what has been said, or even suggested. For, after all, Comedy, like life itself, is most blessedly various. There is no reason why it should always be *pure* Comedy, severely rational, or severely anything. Some men like to mix the possible with the impossible, carefully disguising the latter, and then you have Farce, than which few things are more entertaining. Other men mingle the rational with the romantic, and you have Poetic Comedy of a sort: "The Tempest" or "As You Like It."

Even Molière, when in "Alceste," a comedy of the purely rational kind, he failed to carry his audience with him, harked back to something broader, to a mood of more geniality. But, in view of our somewhat commercialized theater, it should not be forgotten that he was never untrue to himself; that is, he would not regain his popularity by a lie, by a stroke of sentimentality. On the other hand, if ever a dramatist took pains to entertain his audience, he was the man. And one of his means of entertainment was the creation of character, especially of such characters as are not so singular and eccentric that an auditor will say, "No doubt there are such birds, but I never have seen them."

Molière avoids these rare birds, these eccentrics, because they have so little bearing on life as we know it. The seeing of them on the stage entertains, but the entertainment is shallow: we soon forget what we saw, and refuse to see it twice. What gives us the most pleasure is to see a character, who, we can swear, is no infrequent occurrence. The truth is, the knowledge of character is so important in daily life that an audience, taking nothing else on the stage seriously, takes that so. For even illiterates know that the men and nations which understand character are successful. The lack of that native understanding runs through the whole of German literature; you may almost say that because of it the Germans lost the war. The English, inexpressive as they are, and stupid as we stupidly think them, know men, understand character. And, thus, we are led to perceive that it was not by chance that they produced Shakespeare.

So, for the dramatist, everything depends on the choice of his characters. On that, and on his natural,

delicate, creative sensitiveness to the supreme need of not "forcing" these characters. A character, let us say, once chosen, is thereafter no puppet, to be moved hither and yon at the will of the master of the show. He is, rather, something which abounds so much in his own sense that his inventor or creator must be a quietist in regard to him: must wait in silence, and listen till he speak or act, and then with exactness and humbly put it down. But the great comedian selects his characters well at the start. He does not inject into some lovely comedy a villain of such violence or vulgarity that he will break the mood, and, in action, turn all to blood and tears.

Turning to Shakespeare for an example, I know of none better than that scene, the seventh of the second act of "As You Like It," where, a table being laid with eatables, in the forest, and the young and starving gentleman, Orlando, seeing it to be so, he enters with his drawn sword, resolved to eat, let the unknown host say what he may. The exiled Duke is, however, himself eating, or about to do so. Turning to the scene you will see that it hangs on the slippery edge of a duel, in which a death might easily come about. What keeps it from this violence, what keeps it Comedy, is simply the good sense, the humane moderation of feeling and self-control of the exiled Duke.

In the "Uncle Vanya" of Tchekhov, the same spirit is at work. The play is forever on the edge of a pathos which would carry us presently beyond even tears, into a world of cruel despair. But, exquisite artist as he was, the Russian dramatist keeps it comedy.

But there is in every play a something even profounder than the matter of the characters chosen: namely, the sort of man the creator of all these human shadows is,

in himself. How does he regard the world of action and feeling, the world of men? How does Shakespeare regard love? Is it, as conceived by him, always a cause of ruin? Is it never what the Elizabethans called *fancy*, irrational, as wild as a weather-cock, but easily to be brought to a good issue?

Those exquisite, decorative, dove-colored and wide-winged little people of the night air, whom our children call "millers," since a bloom of the finest flour covers and beautifies them,—this wild and wandering people, beholding with their innocent eyes a great and adorable sunrise in the midst of circumfluous shadow, flutter and fly toward it, and are presently, as we fear, singed to nothing in the heat of our kerosene lamp. Well, Shakespeare has, sometimes, the lamp lit, and the window of his play open to the human moths of his imagination; but, being really an American, and therefore born kindly, as well as before his time, he permits no tragic incineration. Rather, he seizes the lovers, so foolishly in love with love, and, as a man would a moth, he turns them loose on the freedom of the dark. The curtain then falls, and the audience goes home, reminded that pining away for love is no such great matter.

What do we gather from this? Clearly that Shakespeare was a poet, but not sentimental. We are supposed to know nothing of his character. But, in a play played, the author's character comes across to the audience as it were the blast of a trumpet. Wycherley, aside from his limpid prose, is a callous and cruel fellow. You feel it when you see his play. And Tchekhov,—was there ever such an unstrained love of humanity, such a rational tenderness, such sweetness of nature? If I should say the Mohammedan Arab could not create in the spirit of

Tchekhov, should I not thus make clear that the man's character was a product of Christianity?

High Comedy, which my students asked me about, is not with us a thing of class, since in our country classes are fluent. But, though static classes are absent, we have, none the less, the higher and the lower sorts of human beings. High Comedy is, then, plainly, a Comedy that deals with men who are superior to the rest of us. That is, it deals with relatively perfected creatures, with what used to be called their manners, the ways and customs of them. And Low Comedy treats those people whom we Americans do not dare to call low, but know they are. It might be called the Comedy of the unfinished man; or, if we must be scientific, the Comedy of the Relatively Less Complex.

It was asked me why I disliked the new drama. By this I judged was meant the newer American plays, and the impressionistic drama of Europe. The answer to the question is a simple assertion in denial: I like the newer drama more than the drama of thirty or of twenty years back. It is freer, for one thing; more intellectual; a less restricted form; and, when it is expressionistic, or even merely fantastic, it has more depth and scope. It is, too, less debilitated by the sterilizing influence of French realism. It is more inclusive, and more poetic than our earlier drama.

But no one talks poetry in real life, so why, I infer, should we write poetry into the mouths of the people in a play?

I suppose that the wild notion that the "poetic" is a matter of words comes from the baneful mouth and empty mind of some professor in a State college. I put him as low as I can. The "poetic" is like the comedic,

or the tragic: it is a mood, but, as I have indicated, more inclusive than either. The man who has it not, in some form, is dead to the world he lives in. The nation which lacks it is sick, or miseducated,—educated out of it, as we, with all our natural and inborn gift for poetry, have so patently been. It is true that Shakespeare wrote in blank verse, and used much imagery. But the reason why Shakespeare is a great dramatic poet is not here, or but in part. Seeming to beg the question, he was a poet because he regarded life and the universe poetically; which is, however, merely a short way of saying that the beauty of it all gave him an infinite delight; thrilled, satisfied, and filled him with enthusiasm. And that he regarded this beauty as *significant*.

Beauty, defined by the definers in so many ways, whatever else it may be, is certainly either the presence of life, in perfection; or it is the representation, the recreation in art, of such life. Death is ugly; so is carrion, and so is a junk-heap. So are many criminals. Most stupid, and all envious people are ugly; and, in the invisible moral world, cheating at cards, or cruelty to a child, is, we all feel, an ugly habit. The plain American thinks thus. He speaks of cheating as a "dirty" action. He speaks of "foul" play, and "fair" play. Beauty is, I repeat then, either the presence or the expression of life in perfection. Naturally the arts busy themselves with it. And the drama without it is something self-restricted, and infinitely less pleasurable.

Take it in the simplest way: Al Jolson in his black make-up radiates good will and amiability, and is in every motion one of the most graceful of human beings. So here you have moral beauty, and physical grace. And our citizens pay four dollars and forty cents to see it.

The dramatist who can combine beauty with action will have the American audience at his feet. For that audience has now, since long, shown in every way it can that what it most likes is the fullness of life in action: and that way of looking at life, which we find in great poetry. And, poets, apart from their images, their hendecasyllables, or their free verse, are those men who are natively in love with life. They praise life. That's what they are for. It is their function. But the French realism of which I spoke disrespectfully was not in love with life. And, accordingly, it sterilized literature wherever its influence prevailed.

Of all people, we needed it the least. For our literature has, now for this thousand years and more, been fearless in that truer and higher realism which consists in a boundless delight in reality; in all realities. It has always called a "spaed a spaed"; which, being interpreted, means a bitch a bitch. From Beowulf, through Chaucer, Marlowe, and the refined but heaven knows realistic Miss Austen, to the last novel, or play, our literature has been, and is, prevailingly, powerfully, fearlessly, and giftedly realistic in this, the only possible sense: it rejoices in reality.

Besides which, whatever good there may have been for us in the French movement has long imparted its influence to our novels and plays. The younger Italians, the younger men of Central Europe, have done with it ages ago. If you as much as mention it, they put you down as a noodle. They are living in, or at least they are preparing, a new Period. Must we then still chew on this twice-chewed cud? It reminds me,—I speak like, as it were, a political orator,—it reminds me of a story:

When the Indians of the Red Bud Agency complained

to their agent that they were starving, this sarcastic fellow asked them why they didn't kill and eat a certain lean and sickly dog which hung about the camp? The reply of one Black Cloud, a dignified wit, was, that as to the dog in question, he was, firstly, so lean that there was nothing on him to eat; and, secondly, they had already eaten him. "And," continued Black Cloud, "among the Sioux it is not the custom to eat the same dog twice!"

The American spirit is at times inconsistent, inchoate, confused; no doubt, it has its worse side; its appalling sentimentality, and its insane frivolity; even its cruelty, as our humor sometimes indicates. We are a prosperous people; and prosperity, the being at a lusty and perpetual picnic, is a great trial to man or nation. We exhibit, therefore, the horrid faults I have put down. And, of course, we are little contented. We hardly know how to live, to live well and in happiness. But our people have poetry in their very souls; the poetic attitude to life is the attitude they understand. Races do not change. And the past of our race shows where it is gifted: not in painting or sculpture, possibly, not in philosophy; but plainly and assuredly in politics and poetry: in the poetic drama.

KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURE

ALL true progress, all advance, all culture, all greatness and power comes from man, not from a book or from machinery, or law; not from a code, or a constitution; not from dead and mechanical things; not from the printed page; not even from the myriad printed pages which convey to us the whole mass, the complex finitude of man's knowledge, acquired or generated in the secular period. Nay, but from a man and to a man. Thus, and only thus, is culture, wisdom, life, grandeur, nobility, manners, beauty and behavior of living, and all other delights, and powers passed on, communicated, seized upon, fed upon, digested into our life and soul, and made one with us;—made over by us, made and melted into our living. Knowledge is by books. But life is generated only by life.

We must recognize that all Art is a way of avoiding the effects of death. The picture, the statue, convey a man: his conception, his ideal, his liking for this and that:—Line, color, melody or marble: it is all a man. He states his life in this way.

The man multiplies himself thus: lives at a distance from himself; lives and acts after his decease. The brevity of life and the spatial or temporal limitedness of man, his mortality, are alike avoided, cheated. But there are, too, the personal arts: the art of the orator, the actor, the priest. And in our times, that of the educator: the man who, by his presence, his spoken word,

and living personality, awakens, moves, delights; for, he, too, gives himself *as a whole*. And he, too, is an artist, since all communication is an art. What he gives is no matter. He may give holiness, or the spirit of science, or the pleasure of life, or insight into literature, or understanding of philosophy. What he mainly gives is himself. It must be said, the charm, mystery and power of these personal arts is unspeakably great, for here man acts *directly* upon man. But the effect perishes with its cause; or, it attenuates and dies gradually away, as is the case with the influence of every actor and every religious genius. In the case of the latter a church must be formed. And thus the living fire is taken up, conveyed, carried on and down to other times by the living words of living men. But for the Church the Bible would not now be read. Jesus does not live as printed matter in a book. He lives in the lives of men who have thirstily drunk of, and absorbed His spirit, and who seek by word of mouth, and in the immediacy of the moment, or through the conduct of their lives, to render and pass on Jesus in spirit and in life to other men.

Knowledge is by books, but life is generated only by life. The power to affect men immediately; that is, not merely by the medium of the printed word, is frequently to be observed in the greater poets. They have, not uncommonly, the gift of oratory. Or, at least, they convey themselves easily in conversation. They know men, and therefore make good ambassadors. They know life, and are nearly always moderate, and wiser than the politicians under whom they sometimes serve. Milton was both wiser and more moderate than Cromwell. Whittier was much wiser, and ten times more moderate than William Lloyd Garrison. Lamartine was an orator,

and Byron a statesman "manqué"; that is, he should have been a statesman, but his own character turned him aside and kept him away from his country. I know of no great poet who is not, in his gift and abilities, something more than a poet. But, at all events, one thing is sure: the great poets are, so to say, the Masters of Life. Herein they are like the Saints. St. Francis of Assisi was poet as well as saint, and the most capable of men in practical matters. And so, in conclusion: the Orator, the Poet, the Saint, act directly by the spoken word, and by their personal presence on men. Life only generates life.

WALT WHITMAN

PERHAPS the spiritual quality of a nation is best perceived by dwelling on the character of its greater, its more original minds:—on their character, not merely on their gift or genius;—and by observing their reception at the hands of their countrymen. What use has a given people been able to make of its more gifted sons? No question leads on to much. Men are sometimes born centuries too soon, like the great and astounding Roger Bacon. Or, a man's character and taste are such that his own people cannot make any proper use of him. Sympathy is lacking. Such, in some sort, is the case of Heine in Germany. We, in America, were able to make use of the vast abilities of Washington and Lincoln. And that we were so able characterizes and praises us as nothing else can. The relation poets and religious teachers hold to the people about them is more abstruse. Possibly they come to their own after death; though this, too, informs us in regard to their period. Or they may never come to their own of actual power and influence. The astonishing, manly, and moving eloquence of Phillips Brooks was not put to very great use by the Episcopalian Church. And this all the more clearly indicates the weakness of that Church, or of its Bishops, as Brooks was a man of pure life and lofty character. Aside from his unpopularity within the Church, that he never became an American Figure, tells us something of the American people. Moody was more widely known. That the far-

reaching and fertile discoveries of Mendel, the Bavarian Priest, were allowed to slip into oblivion and remain unknown for 40 years was surely owing more to some human folly or prejudice than to chance. Certainly, England made but a poor use of Byron living, and only of late years has that tremendous, liberating power of his been appreciated and enjoyed. How does the case stand as between the American people and Walt Whitman?

Whitman was desperately, bleakly unpopular during his life. But, as with many another man, if his countrymen neglected, and would have none of him, it was not so in Europe. There, knowledge of his poems increased, and a following grew up speedily; he became, and perhaps today remains a major force in European literature. He has been translated into Swedish, Bulgarian, German, French and, I am told, Chinese. Turning to our own country, Whitman exerts without shadow of doubt, the most active, and powerful influence upon the younger poets, which is to say, the men under fifty. Whitman freed these men from much that would otherwise have weighed them down and retarded their progress. Through him they came to themselves, and found their true direction. And, it must be said, that these, the more recent poets, have, taken altogether, accomplished a very great work. That certain of them have written admirable poems, fresh, forcible and full of a new delight, a new wisdom, goes without saying. But, the main thing is that they have imparted new life to American literature. Since they began to write, another period has set in. And, I repeat, much of what they have been able to do for us, has been owing to Whitman.

But, it is not enough that a poet influence other poets. He should be a source of enjoyment, of power, for men

in general. He should appeal if not to all, at least to many. All free Greeks listened to the Rhapsodists chanting Homer. No man affected other and later poets more than Virgil; yet Virgil was read, was admired, delighted in, by a large body of Romans, who were themselves anything but literary men. Shakespeare is to this day the darling of immense crowds, of whom we must think that the soil of their minds has been very hastily, and superficially cultivated. Shakespeare, however, was playwright, and this latter sort of man, though he have the genius of a god, is yet one who as well by necessity as by instinct and a decided predilection, walks our common earth on firmly planted feet: his subject is Man, and he tells stories about him. Burns is an example however, and perhaps the most striking example of a Lyrist who appeals to a whole race, a whole nation. The Scots *use* Burns. His work is read, recited, sung: it is a sort of national, profane Prayer book and Psalter. His influence is so great that, I dare say, the half of the Scotch church would burn his book of verse tomorrow, if that could remedy the matter. Whitman conceived of his relation to the American people in these same terms. His appeal lay, as he thought, to the whole mass of his countrymen. He directed his words to them. He tells us so himself.

One of his intimate friends said of him: "He was not detached from the common people by his quality, his culture or his aspirations. He was bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh."—And yet, after seventy or more years, Whitman is only accepted by the aristocrats of culture; by belated votaries of Swinburne; by Americans who are Europeanized, in their habits and feelings; by political extremists; by the young radicals of foreign ex-

traction; by menticulturalists; by a host of minor cranks; and,—a very different matter indeed,—by, as I have said, the younger American poets. But, with the American people: with the mechanic, farmer, fisherman, stevedore, brick-layer, clerk, salesman, doctor, lawyer, clergyman, editor, or what you will, Whitman has a scant following. His name even is unknown to tens of millions of his countrymen. When you say 'Whitman,' they interrupt you correctively: "Yes, Whittier is a wonderful poet."

It may be asserted, that nothing in the way of modern poetry has or can have any place in the life of the millions I mention. But, this is not thinking very democratically. Whitman would have scorned such a notion. At all events, it is a striking fact that the American, in general, prefers Whittier to Whitman:—Whittier, who is an unskilled, refined and at intervals a charming poet, but distinctively minor: as distinctively minor as Lowell. Surely, we can say, that this fact needs explanation. For, as I have indicated, Whittier has, now, a very wide circle of readers. How, then, are we to account to ourselves for this continuing unpopularity of Whitman? Is it his fault, the fault of some virtue of his, some quality; or is it some stupidity, prejudice or moral obliquity in the mass of our citizens which renders them incapable of enjoying, that is, of using the "Leaves of Grass"? Whitman himself was not happy,—how could he be?—in this the neglect or aversion of his well-loved countrymen. He opposed it by fortitude, and by patience; but patience and fortitude cost a deal of life.

In seeking to clarify our minds on such a matter, it may be well that we should first remind ourselves of the true nature of poetry, what manner of thing really it is. I know of no better way to do this, than by a very

brief analysis of certain critical doctrines, popular in the latter decades of the 19th century. Though not all of them, many of the critics of that period displayed no interest whatsoever in a poet's attitude to life. The burden or message, or doctrine, or idea, or philosophy, or any possible expression of truth, or of the relation of one thing to another:—all this, they announced, though admittedly, it is the play of Reason, has no place in poetry; gives no pleasure, and is merely so much dead matter, which the "Beauties" of the poem carry along, much as a tumultuous and rapid river may carry on its shining surface the swollen carcasses of swine. They cite Milton as an example of a poet who busied himself with certain theological dogmas; and, they ask, who reads him now for his dogma's sake? He is read, they affirm, for the "beauty" he put into his verses. And so if they are lecturing to young men in a University, they define poetry somewhat as follows: "Poetry is beautiful imagery connected with a high degree of verbal music. Poetry, therefore, does not convey truth. It affirms nothing. It has no relation to life. The "ideas" are of no importance. It is a sign of 'Culture,' to be able in the same hour to enjoy Homer and Baudelaire; Chaucer and Swinburne; Goethe and Novalis; Whitman and Poe. Poetry is a game of Images; an art of Euphony: enjoy it as such." This theory of poetry is in part true: and it would be altogether true, if the universe and man were not what they are.—Let me hasten to say that the opposing view of the matter is not that the intellectual *content* of a poem, as in "Paradise Lost," cannot grow old, and be superseded by modern thought, thus rendering the poem unreadable, because unthinkable. For if a poet burdens himself with the current theology, or philosophy

of his day, or with any body of new ideas, ideas which have not yet been criticized, he runs the risk that, presently, these ideas will no longer be current; no longer be believed in.—The opposing theory, if anything so simple can be so denominated, depends on common experience and no very profound knowledge of the nature of man. The Universe is so constituted that what you are you give, and the end of all art is giving. A poet may, of course, seek to avoid the affirmation of any truth. He may, in a measure, succeed in this design. But, struggle as he may, he cannot omit his *character* from his verses; his temperament, his tastes, what he likes and dislikes, believes in, or fears, or abominates; all these things will out. And they reveal, convey character forcibly; at times with appalling force. Accordingly, when a coward or a man of perverted instinct, writes, whether poem or novel, the tremulous abdominal apprehension, or the sickly perversion come across to the reader, as it were a smell and not an agreeable one. We may say that all art is self-revelation; and, there are men, and very famous ones, who, when they have revealed themselves, we wish they had not. In short, it is natural to like one poem, and loathe another. They may both be by poets who are acknowledged great. Both may be euphonic; the imagery of both original: what of it? A man may speak to me, over my coffee, in tones as dulcet as those of a serpent-dove, but, if what he says causes me disgust; and still more, if I hate the very expression of his face, plainly, I do hate, I am disgusted;—and I bid him depart from me.

This is not to argue that poetry should be didactic, or moral, or address itself to social reform, or the presentation of abstract truth. It does, however, argue that what

we call *taste* is fundamental: we are known by our likes or dislikes: we even know ourselves by them. As they are, we are. When they cease, so do we. And poetry is an expression of likes and dislikes. Man being the thing he is, it cannot be otherwise.

The most superficial analysis of any popular song will convey the conviction that a given number of words, if they are not mere abracadabra, will unavoidably extend a preference to one thing over another: they will unavoidably express a like or a dislike: a want, desire, wish, or what else of motion towards or away from something. The mere fact that one subject rather than another is treated of exhibits a preference.

The natural, the spontaneous thing, and which every movement of the intellect supports, is, that in reading poetry, as in all else, we shall indulge our likes, and acknowledge our preference. If we are musically constituted, and hearing many times the works of a certain composer, we always loathe them, there must be grounds for this. There are paintings on canvas which affect us with a slight nausea.

The fact is that the critics whose æsthetic theory I seek to elucidate, are like a woman of the Town, in whom choice, taste, and natural preference are dead; to whom the profoundest function of life, and the most exhilarating and joyous human relation mean nothing, or mean money to be made. To whom the embrace of one man is as the embrace of another. And who lives and gains where-withal by this docile, or coarse, or depraved, or chilly indifference. Supposing the woman to have, once, been like most women, that is in the possession of the instinct of choice, it is clear that by a course of action, she has

somewhat impaired this normal instinct; the instinct which gives life and authority to preference.

By much learning, or lecturing, or, possibly, from some native coarseness of taste, or some straining to become terribly cultivated, the *Æstheticians* we have in view have destroyed their instinct of preference. To go deeper, the sense of the reality of things, and the stinging joy of the embrace of that reality has departed from them. They are the prostitutes of the intellectual life.

The critical attitude of these people, however, prevailed to no small extent in Whitman's day, and he suffered because of it. They hated the man, but admired the poet. If he announced truth, and revealed a way of life, the first was negligible; the second disgusting and fearsome. But he had brought forth certain Images; and there were to be found in his books passages of some sweetness; he was therefore to be called a Bard. In short, they embalmed him in a sort of hypocrisy of admiration.

"He was not detached from the common people by his quality, his culture or his aspirations. He was bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh." I suppose it would be difficult to put as much of what is false and misleading into the same number of words. Walt Whitman, that is, the man in his outward, his exterior, was in some degree like the "Common People," as the writer quoted, cares to call them. He was easy, humorous, had a broad manner; something of geniality and more of composure. Our people have, frequently, these things; and Whitman's English, as he spoke it, was the English of the plain people of the middle states. He was kindly,—it could be seen in a moment,—and Americans are kindly. And he was exquisitely clean. On the other hand, his hat, his cravat, and his collar were of a Bohemian ancestry and

cut. Many an honest American would be horrified by the mere sight of them on the sidewalk. Moreover, in the man himself, as he moved, walked, and appeared on the street, there was something flamboyant,—Rubens might have painted him. He was a man of florid color, and this flamboyancy, the easy roll of his gait, with his amazing grace,—even when I saw him, as an old man,—all these qualities set him off, at least they set him a little off from the more part of our American people, as we meet them on 14th Street of New York, or on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, or Chestnut Street of Philadelphia.

But, in his moral values, his extensive intellectual culture, his belief in Science, and knowledge of its conclusions; in his secret, mystic Faith and Confidence; in his political philosophy, his aspirations for a life for all men other than the life they now lead; in his superb and overwhelming sense of the importance of his own genius, Whitman was not in the least like the Common people. He was of the people, he believed in the people; but, he was not *like* the people. If in nothing else, he was set apart from the mass of the men of his time and country, by the predicament of his rare genius, and in the fact that his ideals were not theirs. He was a destroyer as well as a creator. If we shall accept Whitman's poetry, as he himself desired it to be accepted: that is as a new sort of poetry, and a new way of living and being:—at one stroke we have dissevered ourselves from the common people.

It has been written, and repeated a thousand times, that there are two great Streams of Human Thought, and Feeling, which flow down to us out of the Past: the one Græco-Roman, the other, Hebraic in origin, but

Christian-European in outcome and temper. These two streams of influence, in combination, or otherwise, form modern Culture, in the larger sense of that word. Sometimes these disparate bodies of thought and feeling, do not combine. Thus, there occasionally appear men, who, in their ideals, in the conduct of their lives, display little of Christian influence. Frederick the Great, and Voltaire were not alike:—but they were alike in this, that they were Christian in a very restricted sense. In general, however, the two streams mingle to form one influence. And, it is clearly to be seen, that when a man draws from both sources, the power of such a participant is greatly increased. Lincoln and Washington are examples of such fusion; and so is such a finely Christian soul as John Wesley. I may take the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, or, preferring a modern, the late William Jennings Bryan, as an example of undiluted Christian culture. To be sure, this conception of culture, as deriving from the classical, and from the old and new Testament, is somewhat partial. The larger portion of our political ideals and institutions are an inheritance from the Anglo-Saxon, or Dane, or Norman. The ideal of personal loyalty, as that of justice, and even of tolerance are definitely non-Christian ideals. But the modern world mingles what is pagan with what is Christian. We are thus more inconsistent than the ancient Romans, or our own Norse ancestors; and infinitely more inconsistent and more complex than the believing Jews of today. Possibly this inconsistency is a source of power. At all events, the conception of our Culture as dual, opens many locked doors; explains much; and, will at once explain Whitman's reception by the American people. The culture of our people, and that means their way of

life, their habit of mind, their likes and dislikes, beliefs, moral attitude and preferences; their prejudices; all that they think, hope, feel, desire and do:—this Culture of theirs is, though not exclusively, yet profoundly Christian. Whoever thinks otherwise, does not know the people.

I shall be reminded, that there are in "Leaves of Grass" abundant traces of Christian influence. These traces could not, indeed, but be there, for Whitman was bred up in a Christian environment. Indeed, his parents were under the direct personal influence of one of the unknown Saints of our country: Elias Hicks, who founded the subsect of Hicksite Quakers; a man of formidable powers, whose example and ideas are still living and active; still circulate in the currents of the religious life of the present. Late in life, Whitman wrote of him with reverence, and a feeling of admiration. It is difficult not to believe that the influence exerted on the boy, for he was then no more than boy, was not decisive of much. Certainly, in reading "Leaves of Grass" one feels at times an emanation or breathing of the Quaker spirit; and if there is any form of Christianity which is pure, as being nearer to the source, it is undoubtedly Quakerism.

But, though Walt Whitman was profoundly Christian, he was also profoundly not. And, it is precisely this mingling and coming together of two divergent, and even opponent powers in his work, which gives it such startling originality. The combination of things is new. Two metals have been fused. The result is a new metal. It must not be hastily inferred that Whitman was, in his work, classical: that he derived anything of importance from Homer, Pindar, or Catullus. I mean, only, that certain of his ideals, his way of life, and much of his work

display a pagan, or at least a pre-Christian and hence anti-Christian conception of what is the good life. He did not go to Plato for this conception. He found it for himself. But, what will the plain American do when he meets this bold conception face to face?

The mechanic and farmer, the industrial worker, or let me say, those of our citizens who not being in the professions, make less than five thousand a year, these men read, as we know, the daily Press; and seldom anything else. But this sort of man goes to church, and in church he sings. Puritanism and emigration having combined to destroy the Folk Song, with its accompanying air, the hymns of our various denominational churches take the place of that lost poetry of the people; and they are, indeed, many of them, true Folk Songs, not to be read: to be sung. It must be kept in mind that reading is not a popular form of entertainment, especially not so amongst men who work in the open air. Such a man comes home to his family tired from labor, and drunk with ozone. Reading implies a certain freshness. The plowman, or plumber of today, if the actor shall read it to him or the singer sing it for him, he is satisfied. An extended reading under the lamp is beyond him. He dozes. Reading after all is a solitary and unsocial act. I suppose it may best be regarded as an extension of Private Devotion. In any case, it is the class with a little more money, the class which does not work with its hands, which reads for diversion, or edification. In the relatively literate class, which I now have in mind, no young man, after he leaves the Public School, reads "Thanatopsis" or "Snowbound," or "Florence Vane" or the "Swimming Pool" of Whitcomb Riley, or the ef-

fusions of Miss Wilcox. The time for such toys has passed. But he sings hymns and not only in church.

There are certain hymns which contain a kind of enamored or voluptuous worship of things physical. These our young men in the country frequently employ as serenades and love songs. Leaving the Spelling Bee, or on the canal boat, between cock-fights, or wherever you like, they sing these devout lyrics, but not with devout intention. The intention is of another sort. I mention this merely in order that we may feel the deep, indigenous, popular quality of these verses. In the church itself they are spiritually relished and believed in, for, they are Truth in metrical form. Let me now quote a few brief but exemplary lines from one or another of the hymns to which I refer: hymns which I have myself heard at many Revivals and such especially as are sung and delighted in, for their religious fervor. A line or two of each will suffice: the point of attention being their philosophy of life.

"I will sing you a song of that Beautiful Land
The far away Home of the Soul——"

"We are going Home,
No more to roam,
No more to sin and sorrow——"

"Down Life's Dark Vale We Wander."

"Oh, to be nothing, nothing,—
A Broken and empty vessel."

"This world's a wilderness of woe."

One after another of the authors of these spiritual outpourings speak of themselves as "slaves" or preferably

as "worms." I have no wish to laugh or cause others to laugh at these expressions. It is true, I take them to have arisen from a strain of bastard Christianity, and to be impure, therefore, in their historical origin; but any man who has lived in his natural, his human and undisciplined emotions, who has endured the onset and departure of these, knows well that he is, at times, subject to Soul-sickness. Such a sickness of the moral nature is what these hymns express. It is from a strange spiritual nostalgia, and Earth-hatred, from a horror, even from a fear of Life, that they arise. They are by no means without *quality*, being both imaginative and melodious. Their pathos is often searching.

"For weary feet
Awaits a street
A wondrous pave and golden;
For hearts that ache
The angels wake
The story sweet and olden."

They can be more disagreeable:—

"Tell me the story simply,
As to a little child,
For I am weak and weary,
And helpless and defiled."

One more example: and this last, something of a jingle:—

"Oh, what shall I do to be saved?
No light, and no hope I can see;
No help in myself can I find,
Oh, is there no mercy for me?"

I do not quote the better ones, some of which are indeed beautiful and moving. I quote only those which

express this nostalgia of a perfect and easy life in the Hereafter. These are Methodist lyrics. But I could as well take something from the Hymn Book of the Episcopal Church, if it were not that the lines I should naturally quote, are too painful. There is, however, that well-known hymn:

"Art thou weary, art thou languid,
Art thou sore distressed?"

Out of respect for the feeling of others I quote no further: the words are well-known. But I cannot be silent upon the word "languid." It is detestable. It is so because with this word, as with only too many words and lines in the hymns of the various Churches, we have the uneasy sense of being in the presence of pathological emotion. The hymn, as a whole, is sincere and simple in feeling. But I repeat "languid" is something more than questionable. Not mincing the matter, there is throughout many of our hymns a strain of unmanliness. The man who wrote and felt thus had ceased to walk erect and proud; he had ceased to speak fearlessly or gladly with his God; he had ceased to think well of himself, and thought very ill indeed of his Creator. And so, in his heart, and hymns, he grovels, cowers, trembles, and asks even that the Almighty and Eternal Power shall stoop and save him from his physical languor. Or he speaks of himself as "helpless and defiled,"—an expression too horrible to contemplate. As I have said, these feelings, and the ideas which express and increase them, spring from a profound sickness of the soul or the body, and are necessarily pessimistic. They involve a contempt of life here and now. As in the line, "Oh, to be nothing, nothing! a broken and empty vessel."

And now comes Whitman, and addressing himself to the consideration of our human life, as directly as the Hymnist, he writes:

"O while I live, to be the ruler of life, not a slave!
To meet Life as a powerful conqueror, no fumes, no
ennui, no more complaints or scornful criticism.

O to have Life henceforth a poem of joys! To dance,
clap hands, exult, shout, skip, leap, roll on, float on,—
to be indeed a God."

The contrast is not without its accompanying enlightenment. And so, continuing, when the Hymnist writes that Time is his enemy, but Eternity his Home; and that this earth is a graveyard, whence he, arising on angel wings shall spring to

"A home prepared for me,
Where I shall live forever
So happy and so free."

To this Whitman replies with a burst of the "grotesque," the passionate grotesque:

"I do not snivel that snivel the world over,
That months are vacuums, and the ground but wallow
and filth."

And so he proceeds:—

"Happiness, which, whoever hears me, let him or her
set out in search of this day.

I keep no account with lamentation! What have I to
do with lamentation?

The soul forever and ever!

The beautiful touch of Death.

I am satisfied; I laugh, dance, sing. I have no mock-
ings or arguments, I witness and wait."

The Pauline doctrine of the enmity of the flesh with the spirit fares no better at Whitman's hands. He writes, as it were with a smile, "I dote on myself; there is that lot of me, and all so luscious." Let me, however, hazard the opinion that the spirit which pervades the *Children of Adam* is, in a large degree, a spirit of protest. Whitman protests against the way in which the men and women of his day regarded and spoke of their mutual relation, their human and natural enjoyment the one of the other. Unfortunately when a man writes as *against* something he hates, he generally goes too far. And even if not, nothing is harder for a poet to do than to speak in his verse of the intimacies of the bodily life in a way which is not customary in his own age and amongst his own people. He at once becomes self-conscious. He cannot shake it off. Accordingly, what he writes wants something even of the *natural*. We have only to compare the *Children of Adam* with Homer to perceive the truth of this. With much of Whitman's worship of the flesh of man, with his passion and his reverence for it, we may, and I feel should, sympathize, but not with all that he writes. As I have said, we recall the absence of coarse words in Homer where the functions, or where the pleasures of the flesh are spoken of. The same refinement, if we can call it that, is to be found in the Icelandic Sagas. We must suppose the barbarian has a preference for it. No doubt our more sedentary life with what else there is of repression in our laws and habits causes us to burst forth in an explosion of crudeness: an explosion of the obscene naming of things; a tearing off of refined or conventional veils and concealments. The plain American, however, is a good deal of a Barbarian. His view of what we now so glibly call the

"Sex question" is as simple, as downright as that of the Greeks of Homer's time, or as that of the Vikings of the time of King Harold the Fair-Haired and Glum the Grough. Quite apart from Christian doctrine or discipline it is, I feel, not in the American to take over, enjoy and make his own, the attitude of Whitman in the matter. He does not like it that way. There is in our American Christianity much with which Whitman has no patience whatever. There is the life-hatred, and life-fear I have mentioned; the strain of a sickly nostalgia of eternal ease; there is, also, that other powerful strain of feeling which has its source in the earlier Jewish psychology, and is so frequently expressed in the Old Testament: the strain of passionate but pious intolerance, cruelty and hatred.

"Thou hast broken the teeth"—of the enemies of the writer. "Break their teeth, O God, in their mouths.—That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies: and that the tongue of thy dogs may be red through the same."

To all this unmanly, or certainly very naïf feeling, Whitman replies with the profound and moving poem in which he expresses his feelings on uncovering the faces of three of the Confederate dead in a hospital.

In short, the American people are Christians. Christianity, in whatever form, and whether we like it or not, is the habit of their minds, the source of their morals, the parent of their ideas, their culture, their religion.

But to enjoy, to use "Leaves of Grass," an American must have lost, not all, but a good part of this Christianity of his. Or he must be in the process of losing it. Or his religion must be growing at a very rapid pace. He must, like a tree in the tropics, be living in

both spring and autumn; at one and the same moment, shuffling off the old leaves of the spirit and extruding the new. But this vigorous and tropical habit is not common.

It may be returned upon me that our Christianity is merely of the church, and that in our hearts we are not truly Christians. But the American man is Christian in a deeper sense than anything which he says or does in church on a Sunday would lead a foreign observer to suppose. He is Christian in temper and ideals.

* * * *

What future, what likelihood of an increase of influence in the future is there for Whitman's many and wonderful poems?

No man, I suppose, no poet ever suffered so much from his friends or admirers. During his life he was surrounded by men who were what is called half-baked; and to this day his works seem to exercise a fatal attraction on all sorts of incomplete men: men who have not finished themselves, men who possess culture, of a sort, but almost no education; or men who are in some way eccentric, or who lack experience of reality and wish they had had it. These latter are those who delight in Whitman's least admirable lines; in those passages where he is crude and violent, by way of enraged protest against our earlier American admiration of a bloodless refinement. The raw phrases I allude to, make these weaklings feel barbarous and savage, strong and terribly real. Whitman's genius lies elsewhere than in these minor defects of taste, just as the genius of Luther lies elsewhere than in his coarseness and vituperation. But the admiration of these unadmirable things has obscured the man and his work.

Looking then, to the future, we must surely say that the American people miss much in shutting their hearts and minds to this man who lived so deeply, so calmly, so profusely, in their midst, and yet was not known of them: this poet who created so much Power, and who, in himself, was so like his own poetry that when you saw him, you felt that he and his poems were merely one thing. You felt, too, in seeing him, that there was an unaccountable moral strength and beauty in the man himself. Perhaps, as you entered his door, he took your hand in his, and keeping it there while you both moved he led you into his room, his small, clean room in that little house as of some mechanic, in Camden; and there you saw his table with its untidied litter of books and papers. The table was next the window, and strangely enough for a writer, the window was to the right of it. Whitman, when you had thus been brought in, sitting at the table, asked you, possibly, who you were; and what you liked, as if he had expected you; or rather, as if he had known you years before, but had recently lost sight of you. There he sat, with his clear blue eyes, his very fine white hair, his florid color, his ample person; and the redundant outline of cheek, resulting from the sedentary life, the life he had to lead after his first stroke of paralysis. You would notice, as you sat there, that his appearance was that of a man twenty years beyond his actual age. And then as you possibly dwelled and dreamed upon his features, his countenance, his slow smile, his profound and reserved glance,—and none could have been more so!—as you dwelled, with what sensitive apprehension and feeling you might have for these appearances, it stole upon you, that here was not merely a man of intellectual gift, or even genius. The appearance of Whit-

man was not as partial and one-sided as such words seem to imply. He looked what he actually was: one of those rare men who, like the greater Saints of the Catholic Church, are of such an amazingly perfected humanity, that even displaying no gift, as of the poet, painter, soldier or statesman, they are yet to be esteemed as men of genius. Their genius is of the moral and spiritual nature. They are not masters of color, or form in marble, or other substance; they are Masters of Life. They know how to live well and perfectly, and they actually and inevitably do so live. Whitman was not a saint in the sense of one who is ascetic or devoted in direct ministration to others. But in the larger sense I have indicated, he belongs in the category of such men. They are rare and in our country little understood. Because with us, Being is not enough; to justify himself a man must be capable of doing something, and do it. It is true, Whitman was a great maker and molder of language: an artist in words, a creator of ideas, and all else which these things imply. But to his countrymen he appeared as an indolent old man, doing nothing but stringing words together, and those not to their taste.

As you sat in his presence, and he read his poems to you, as feeble, stricken and white haired as he then was, it was impossible not to see the other and younger, mature and athletic man of twenty years earlier. Even as he was, there streamed from him something of power, but of calm power. He radiated something so uncommon that you would not again in a lifetime feel these same human beams, the same radiant force. I must, with Keyserling, suppose Whitman to have been physiologically perfect beyond the lot of the human being of our secular

period.—Such, briefly, was the man as he appeared. And most assuredly, he, his life, his actions, his words, all that he was, were one with his poems.

In any consideration of these, and in setting Whitman over against the very people he wrote for, it may be well to recall that Plato banished the poets from his ideal republic lest they should corrupt it. Commenting on the reason for that expulsion, the famous Dr. Jowett, the master of Balliol, wrote as follows:

“But there might be a poetry which would be the hymn of divine perfection; a strain which would renew the youth of the world; and which would find materials in the living present.”

It springs at once to mind that the Hebrews called our psalter “The Book of Laudations” or praise; and, again, that Lucretius when he wrote his great philosophic poem, entitled it, on or concerning “The Nature of Things.” Whitman conveyed himself, his “message” in a single phrase when he wrote those great and singular words: “Open mouth of my soul, uttering gladness, eyes of my soul, seeing perfection.”

In the light of this phrase, and with these other allusions in mind, with his poems and the man himself in mind, we are, plainly, forced to characterize him as a philosophical poet. We can only say that the substance of what he has written is certainly neither more nor less than a Hymn of the Perfection of Things. But philosophical poets are rare amongst the Anglo-Saxons. So rare that they are little understood. Moreover, the Poet, the Philosopher and the Creator of a new religion are all subservient to the spirit of their time. Thus it frequently happens that the Philosopher, as in Nietzsche’s

case, is slighted till after his death. The Saviour of men is crucified. And so the poet, when his philosophy, his religion, his moral system, his way of life, are not those of his people,—the poet is ignored. Whitman is undoubtedly a philosophical poet, though he is something more, too. And this something more that he is, in his work, is related to the man himself. He was not, by nature, or not solely, an artist, a writer of books, or *writer* at all. Rather as I have said, he was one of those human beings who act upon men directly, as the sun acts when it shines and pushes on a substance. He was not a Saint. But his method of action was theirs; direct and immediate, not by the printed word. There was that in the man, the influence of which in his work is so elusive, so tantalizing, so winning and so holding: namely, an incredible human perfectness.

Addressing himself to the hopeless amongst men, the dispirited and sorrowful, he writes:

“Long enough have you dreamed contemptible dreams, —I know I am deathless. I know this orbit of mine cannot be swept by a carpenter’s compass. I know I shall not pass like a child’s carlacue cut with a burnt stick at night.

“What, do you suspect death? If I were to suspect death, I should die now. Do you think I could walk pleasantly and well-suited toward annihilation?”

What a glorious and glittering sunrise real originality is! What a penetration these beams of truth have! How they surprise, dazzle, warm and delight!—How they urge something within us to come to its flower!

We must not find fault with the American people that they will not accept Whitman. Every people must protect itself, must protect its culture from what is alien

to it, destructive of it. When a people ceases to do this, its Culture dies. The American people has, wisely, protected itself from Swinburne, and Pater, and Poe, and Karl Marx, and D'Annunzio. For like reasons it protects itself from Whitman.

But, although not in every word, or in all ways, yet largely, broadly, the future is with him. He is amply secure. Time will prove his friend. In the course of time, and as Science penetrating our thought and revolutionizing it, becomes in its turn the parent of a new religion, Whitman will come to his own.

THE TRUE AMERICA

IF a man would know the true state of things in his own country, let him pay heed to what the men of five and twenty say. Sometimes, to be sure, they will seek to dazzle and dismay the aged and infirm of mind. We have had this wish in our own youth. Timid old men are tiresome. But, as often as not, the youth of the land will astonish you not only by their faith in liberal and humane ideals; but, also, if more infrequently, by the firmness and definition of their political principles. On occasion they will set you sharply right. If you are pessimistic, display no enthusiasm, prophesy Evil, and are generally in a European frame of mind, they will certainly correct you; possibly, not without scorn; or, they will smile indulgently, and give you politely to understand that many years have corrupted your judgment. Occasionally, however, it works the other way. You, perhaps, are the happy possessor of the enthusiasm, the substantive belief.

Privileged with the friendly companionship of a young man of affairs, and speaking with him, on a day now some years ago, of our American system of things, doubtless I displayed an uncritical enthusiasm and failed to qualify the admiration I expressed for the singular capability our people are possessed of, in the domain where so many peoples fail: the domain of self-government. At all events my companion, smiling agreeably, broke into a polite satirical vein:

"You know," said he, "I never before met anyone with such a profound belief in American Institutions. If you do not mind my saying so, I never knew that anyone could care so tremendously about the Common Law, and Trial by Jury, and the Grand Jury System; and the Constitution and Bill of Rights, and Personal Liberty under the Law, and the Supreme Court; the whole Judicial system; and our political temperament: our coolness, wisdom and our sense of justice, our kindness, and our,—what is that phrase of yours?—the way we make the whole thing work!—Honestly, I never dreamed anybody could be passionate about Magna Charta!"

"Well," I replied, "possibly I go too far, too fast.—Perhaps having of late lived a good deal in Europe has sharpened the edge of my admiration for the substantive side of things in America. Or, perhaps, my early attendance at the Harvard Law School softened and disintegrated such mind as I then was in possession of. Or, it may be, that, living in America so much, so freely, so long, has warped and perverted me into patriotism;—at all events your list of my admirations is correct. And, with regard to life in our Country, the truth is, I feel terribly at home in it, and I believe this weakness of mine is not entirely owing to the Grand Jury System, or the other legal and political erections you mention. After all, there is another way of taking America. Our Country is not only form and habit; not merely so much institution and law.

"In as far as it expresses itself, in religion, politics or poetry, every race or tribe has its own *spirit*. We are sensible of the spirit of the Jewish race when we read the Psalms, or of the Hindoo if we look into the Upanishads. The two spirits are not the same. They

are, indeed, alien and antagonistic, the one to the other. Again, if you will give yourself the singular pleasure of reading the 37th chapter of the *Annals of Livy* you will at once feel yourself in the presence of the Roman Spirit: the *Virtus*, *Gravitas*, and *Pietas* of that great people.

"And so there is an American Spirit, and a very great and powerful Spirit it is; only more complex than that of the Roman. What, then, must we think of that Spirit?

"Whatever man creates, is subject to the discretion of time. Political institutions are the frail and temporal abodes of the people of a day. They are like those three-sided bark *wicky-ups*, or shacks, which the wandering hunter throws together, and under which he crawls, finding protection from the rain and hail. Nations themselves fray away, and are lost; or they shatter and fall. Races are mongrelized. Nothing escapes the Universal Flux. But, as long as a tribe, race, or nation remains itself it possesses and exhibits that certain character, or genius, or spirit, which I have mentioned, and which is extraordinarily delightful to every lover of his kind; and, all that the nation constructs, or creates at the hands or minds of its more gifted sons, whether in art, music, poetry, custom or law, is the work of this genius, and shows its origin.

"So, too, I repeat, we Americans are possessed of a certain spirit. Now if you ask me to define that spirit, I shall acknowledge my inability to do this, and shall simply say that the lives, the words and works of our greater men are full of it."

"America seems to me singularly devoid of greater men."

"As you see it. But, certainly not of a great Spirit."

IN VIRGINIA

THE barefoot negro boy, having received his orders about the calf which had just been dropped, slipt out of the room, and the interruption over, the old gentleman showed himself willing enough to listen to my denunciation of our American indifferentism in political matters; —though, what he said, afterwards, in answer to my accusations, gave me pause; and still later, moved me, indeed, to a long train of reflections.

It was the evening of a cold November day and we were seated about the log-fire in his small sitting room, on the dark wall of which there was a daguerreotype of his grandfather in the costume of 1820; and another of himself, in his regimentals and epaulets taken at the close of the war between the States: erect, neat, handsome, hopeful, resolute and robust, so he appeared in the little faded portrait. Now, reclining in his easy chair, in his dingy clothes, gray-bearded, with a shock of loose gray hair, a gaunt, swarthy man of bold features and sad eyes, he listened to my diatribe. The day's work was over, and as his game-chickens were all going to roost, there was little likelihood of another battle among them such as we had witnessed in the morning. He was resting or perhaps patient, but at all events attentive, so on his saying, with his customary and pleasing gravity: "Sir, continue with your jeremiad," I did continue.

"The trouble with our people is that they are indif-

ferent to the loss of liberty. If Thomas Jefferson were alive today he would write a thousand letters, and form a party on the issue. Jefferson would be indignant. The liberties of the citizen have been curtailed, first one and then another; and for what does government exist, save to ensure independence from foreign domination, and to support and protect the citizen in his liberties? And what is Liberty but freedom of choice? So that without it man is a slave. Better liberty without government, than government without liberty. And as for State Rights,—local self-government,—it will not be long before the great Commonwealth of Virginia will be, and will be writ down as, the County of Virginia; or, you will get an order from the Head of the Bureaucracy in Washington to the effect that the State of Virginia shall hereafter be called, known, and denominated, as U. S. Section 141, B.”

The old gentleman smiled courteously at me, and nodded his head, but perhaps more in understanding than agreement.

“Well,” I said, and here I tried to gather my wits together, for I had every reason to respect his opinion: “We Americans are immensely prosperous. Prosperity is as great a trial as the reverse of it. The war’s over. The Country is at peace. Men are making money. When a man is making money he cares nothing about political matters. He lapses into indifferentism. He won’t bestir himself. He won’t even vote. A general law is involved; not only Americans, but human beings in general do, and will do nothing great, or good, or wise, or constructive, save under the painful pressure of circumstances. They move only when they have to move. They are active only when an extension of passivity means destruction or death. Only a few are ambitious.

Only the few are preyed upon, or if you like, inspired by the passion of accomplishing some great work whether for themselves or for others. When the average man's stomach is full, he reads the paper and goes to sleep with his stocking feet to the stove.—Men *do things*, only as they are pursued and pinched by hunger, fear, death or taxes. It is this political indifference, this lethargy in which we indulge selves which gives money the decisive power it has in all our political life.” My old friend nodded sympathetically. “Money rules America, and the American does not know it. The money of some Organization, or some Minority, bound together by a common interest, or a common fanaticism; the money of some short-sighted and unscrupulous Church, or of some alien Race; or the money of International High Finance. It rules us through the Press. The Press is not venal;—not precisely. But a daily paper, or a monthly magazine, is a means of making money. How shall it make it? By keeping in with all other moneyed powers. By never leading, and always following with a proud and indomitable air of leadership. The Press is the Athenian Demagogue of our day, or, if you like, the courtier who flatters the young and foolish King: ‘The oncoming surf itself will not dare to wet his foot’; and, the American people, unlike the wise Dane, is flatterable, and immediately with this demagogue of a daily paper in his lap, he goes to sleep once more, with his feet to the stove. Let me go back.—The Press supplies the American people with its knowledge, its facts. And these facts are either colored, or touched up, or something essential is left out, or, they are even false;—I refer especially to our foreign news;—and the American does not know it. And, I repeat, the Press is not, herein,

at fault. The Press is not entirely venal, or vicious, or unprincipled. But the men, or organizations of men who use the Press to further their own ends are vicious, venal, and unprincipled; or, say, in all moderation: they serve their own interests; not ours. We speak of the liberty of the Press: well, it exists legally, and in appearance; but the actual liberty, the reality of it was done away with long ago and, to come full circle, it is our political indifferentism which permits this state of affairs. I confess it chokes me. I see nothing ahead, but,—the usual thing:—a great people, somnolent, cynical, indolent, easy to be fooled,—too prosperous to care,—a prey to luxury, a people of blind intelligence; and full of pride,—full of that *Hubris* which the Greeks feared;—and then, suddenly, the thunder-clap of some Event, and starting from their slumber,—they start, indeed,—but it is too late.”

The old gentleman poked the fire and remarked in his old and gentle voice:

“Human nature is very imperfect, sir.”

The colored boy was again in the room, though when he had slid in, was impossible to say.

“Captain, they’s a-fightin’, sir,” he announced.

My old friend rose stiffly, and leaving the house, we went into the chicken yard, where, sure enough, there was a lively cock-fight, feathers flying, the cats on the roof, and all the villatic fowls attentive. My friend watched them awhile with composure and with the interest of one technically instructed; but, presently, he motioned the boy, and between them they parted the combatants, and cooped them up for the night. The Court-house bell struck the hour. It was late twilight. But, the old man,—I was deeply attached to him,—

seemed to enjoy the cold, still air; and leaning against the wood-pile, he spoke, with his customary grave inflections, and the Virginia accent that was always so agreeable to hear.

"That smaller cock," he said, "is the most competent fighter I ever possessed. He's a Smoke-ball. The hens lay copiously." In answer to a direct question of mine, he continued:

"I *like* game chickens, sir, because they are courageous creatures, and beautiful to look at. But, touching on what you were saying, a moment ago, I am an optimist, sir.—I *hope* I am a Christian man, but I know I am an optimist. I have lived a long time in the world, and I have observed that the Good triumphs."

A few minutes later, having lit the lamp in his sitting room, he continued, as he lit his pipe rather awkwardly:—

"I don't doubt, sir, that much of what you say is true. Though I think I would make an exception of the *New York World*. And of these two papers," indicating two weekly journals on the center table: the one entitled *Grit and Steel*;—an excellent sheet, affording the most sober accounts in technical language of all the chicken-mains in the United States;—the other journal was the *Christian Intelligencer*.

"But, sir, there is something more to be said."

I recall, now, that as he spoke, I wished, in response to a sort of stab of fear at the heart, he were less stiff and feeble in his movements. For a moment I seemed to see him at Shiloh, wounded and leading his men to an attack;—an action for which he had been brevetted on the field of battle.

From outside, in the frosty air, there came the rhythmic, rapid clink of a pacer's hoofs on the road. The

County Doctor was going home late. My old friend poked the fire and it blazed up.

"Sir," he said, "character is the greatest power in the world. It will overcome all else. It will in the long run. In the Divine Providence there are great and good men born. They inspire and lead us. We must trust that this will always be. We should so trust. The fountains of God's mercy are unfailing. I often cite to you General Robert E. Lee. I do so again:—as an example of what I mean. He has affected the South, sir. He affected me. You must understand, I did not know him. But, I saw him. That was enough. That and what we all knew of him. He was a great Soldier, a great and good man. He was a perfect Christian gentleman, sir, and he was very beautiful to see. He has inspired the young men of the South. They try to be like him.—As for myself, I am a humble man, and I know I am a sinner; but, there has never been a day since the War was over that I have not said to myself,—when I was about to speak a hasty word, or do something possibly better not done: would General Lee have done or said that?—"

The old gentleman put on his spectacles and unfolded *Grit and Steel*.

It was long afterwards,—so long that my old friend's body lay deep in the red clay on the hillside, above the Court-house;—it was long afterwards that I thought, "Yes, what he said was true: *character* is the greatest of all the powers that act upon men, and no doubt we can afford to put our trust in it, and feel confident it will guide us to better things. The great or original genius is rare. But men of high principles, of courage, honor and probity, men devoted to the Commonwealth, these are not rare. All men love and revere character

of this sort, and all the more so, if high principle is coupled with intellectual power; nor do we have to seek this combination far afield, or only amongst the Singular and the Mighty:—it is found frequently amongst lesser, or unknown and forgotten men.”

THE NEW SECESSION

FAVORED many years ago by an invitation to dine with the Round Table, a club in New York, composed in the main of men who had in some way distinguished themselves, I found my undistinguished self in a seat with John La Farge on my right and a man whose name was as yet unknown to me on my left. Of this gentleman I observed only that he had marked features, and spoke in a low voice.

La Farge, I imagine, put all young men at their ease, especially so if they were ambitious beginners in some art. Accordingly, I enjoyed his talk, and even after these years recall the substance of what he said. Presently, however, I spoke to my unknown neighbor on the left, and in so doing could not but feel,—it was apparent in his glance,—that he was a man of natural and profound reserve. He listened, indeed, seemingly with the best will in the world to his youthful neighbor, but there was all the while a something withdrawn in his eyes, something impenetrable. Prompted, I feel sure, by him, I found myself discussing the relation which education holds to politics. I cannot pretend to recall his words, save only the substance of his opinions in a single phrase as it was spoken. He said that in his opinion it was unfortunate that Americans, the mass of them, did not much dwell on their historic past; did not make use of it; “did not draw on their past for present counsel.”

I was told, in the course of the evening, that my un-

known table companion was Mr. Woodrow Wilson of the University of Princeton.

I am sure that I did not hazard the suggestion, as I should now, that history has become stiff reading, and is so because the spirit of science, and research, has taken it over. Thus the modern historian is first a scholar, and then an artist, if indeed he is an artist at all. No doubt there is something inevitable in this; no doubt it answers to some necessity of the times. But, whether easy or hard, we are all, I feel sure, agreed that historical reading is not one of the pleasures our citizens frequently give themselves, and that if our countrymen, taking them in the mass, can become wise only through the perusal of James Ford Rhodes, or Henry Adams, they will likely remain foolish for a very long time to come. It will be said, however, that editors, clergymen, and statesmen read; and that, as these men are those who enlighten and direct public opinion, this is enough. But even these gentlemen dwell none too frequently in the region of history, and certainly draw very seldom on it for present counsel.

And yet, clearly, we Americans need more than most people to be conversant with our own past. We need it more, for example, than the English, because of the number of the foreign-born we have invited to live with us. For we are all pretty well of one mind about it, that we must either Americanize these foreigners, or else, as Jefferson himself said, submit to foreignization at their hands.

And, aside from the Americanization of Europeans, we have our own people to think of. This consideration comes to us as a matter of some gravity, since, in these last years, great numbers of our native-born Americans

seem to have lost their hold on American principles. The thing has been spoken of so much that it seems hardly necessary to mention these sinners by name, or to recall the occasions when they lapsed from the grace of a true Americanism. For, without entering on the delicate task of defining what we mean by the word "Americanism," we are all, I imagine, of the opinion that justice and moderation are, or have been, dear to the American heart. And, without describing the interplay of these two forces, we know they are both necessary to the life of the Republic: justice as an end, and moderation as a temper of mind qualifying the means to be employed in attaining that end. But justice and moderation have, of late, been apparently so little in evidence that even our President has seen fit to upbraid us for our intolerance. I do not know what, especially, Mr. Coolidge had in mind, but certainly expressions of a very intolerant sort are much in use. We are even getting accustomed to them. So that it may be as well for us to ask ourselves what tolerance really is, and why we are become intolerant.

The latter of these questions is, unfortunately, easy to answer. We are no longer a homogeneous people. There are some fourteen millions of foreign-born among us, whose ideals are not ours. When we seek to Americanize them, they tell us in their foreign tongues that the country is as much theirs as ours, and that they propose to remain themselves, to remain European, and even to Europeanize our social, moral, and political state of affairs. When we protest, these people accuse us of intolerance. And they are not beside the mark in doing so, for clearly we do not tolerate them as they are. But, on the other hand,—a thing not so often mentioned,—

they do not tolerate us: our literature, art, morals, habits of life, our ideals, religion, traditions, and the Republic we have created. There is no mistaking their feelings in the matter, for they tell us in plain words, in editorials, in books, in plays, in political addresses, that they don't like us and our ways. We reply in as plain. And, as I have indicated, this growth of mutual intolerance has come about because our fundamental ideals are at variance.

To cover the whole immense and complicated state of affairs with a word, we are no longer "like-minded." And this, I take it, is the gravest mischance which can befall a people. Hence, and quite inevitably, the spirit of extremism, of unrest, of dissension, of dislocation, which, under a calm surface, is continually in evidence.

These various foreign races, often greatly gifted, and gifted in ways other than our own,—peoples, therefore, that we like, or certainly admire,—have really created, in their mass, a spirit which is in no wise different from the spirit of Secession. They are here; they are with us; we have one State and one Fate; but they have seceded in spirit, and they think it as right and reasonable as did John C. Calhoun.

I am not now accusing or blaming anybody. I seek merely to describe a state of things, a state of feeling, a clash of human wills, and to account for the intolerance, not of the foreign-born for us, but of the old-stock American for the ideals, aims, and activities of these foreign-born.

But what is tolerance? It is founded, no doubt, on a sense of justice and the spirit of moderation. Things, it will be agreed, dear enough to the American heart of the past. But the word and what it represents are not

very accurately understood. It must be remembered that tolerance is not indifference. It is not the spirit that permits any and everything because it values nothing. Tolerance has its limits. We do not call a man intolerant who refuses to have his house burned down or his wife taken from him. And just so we Americans have in the past been intolerant of some things. When our deeper ideals were violated we took action. For example, we did not tolerate the practice of polygamy. Perhaps this was unjust; but clearly it was intolerant. There was a clash of ideals, and, deciding for our own, we forced the Mormons to be monogamous.

In the late war the Government and the people were both intolerant of the refusal to bear arms. And if to-day any large body of our citizens should set about doing away with the State we should not tolerate it. Again, we will stomach a deal of tyranny, of interference with our personal habits, but not beyond a certain point, be the reformers never so native-born. It may be said that when a people is like-minded, their ideal aims not being too far apart, it tolerates much, though not all. But we are no longer like-minded. We are at variance. And accordingly the wise and the moderate among our native-born people are themselves forced into intolerance. They are ready, or not far from being ready, for extreme action. So that, at last, we are somewhat in the situation of continental Europe, where moderation is not popular, not expected, not a tradition; where now one extreme is followed by another; and where it is possible that at any moment force shall be employed, whether to wreck or to save from wreck the Government or the State involved. It is useless to wring our hands and ask how it happened. Useless to blame our-

selves or the stranger within our gates. We have simply to admit that this is the state of affairs and apply what remedy we may be able to apply.

But will history, our own history, avail us in the matter? Will it, that is, help the few who read it to help those who do not? Will it heal our moral disparity? And, since individual character is so deeply involved, we may even ask the larger question: Will the reading of any portion of our historic annals awaken in the foreigner and reawaken in us the love of those virtues which are Roman, constructive, unifying, and upbuilding? Will it make young men more eager to serve the State? Will it indeed make them feel that the State is a worthy object of effort, and that not to save it is, at least in some degree, a betrayal of their race? Will such reading teach us any possible lesson, other than that of the uniform folly of mankind? In short, what counsel can we draw from any portion of our past for the present emergency?

The answer comes readily enough: there are a thousand pages of our history, a thousand events, which teach us, if at all we can be taught, the immense value, the imperative necessity for a people, or nation, that they shall be of one mind. We may be too full of irritation and wrath, too eager in disagreement, to be willing to agree. We may want to disagree, and be resolved to do it. But if we do not close our minds to the lessons of events, and the teachings of facts, we can hardly avoid learning that only by and through a profound inner agreement can a nation and culture flourish and remain one.

I am not unaware that many readers will doubt the actuality of any grave disagreement among the masses of our people. Others will hold that the views I advance

on the whole matter of the divergency of ideal aims are ludicrous and of no value. And yet others will insist that a little easy kindness and a display of understanding will set the whole thing right. The end I have in view is, indeed, not the bringing forward of some proof that we differ profoundly and dangerously among ourselves. My purpose is simply and solely to attract attention to the virtue, the value, the necessity of like-mindedness. And to compass this I propose to put aside the polemical spirit, with all argument; and, leaving the irritating and dubious present, to seek in a period of the past a time and place, a state and city, where men lived and thought and felt as one,—where their agreements were profound, and where, accordingly, they were enabled to govern themselves well, and at the same time to erect a state of civilization and culture of no inconsiderable sort. And, even though we shall be so unfortunate as to be able to draw no counsel from such a study of former times, something may still accrue to us; something of pleasure in the presence of a high degree of spiritual concord; something, too, of that serene delight with which we contemplate beauty, when it is no longer subject to change. For the past, when it is reviewed in the recorded word or action; when we do not throw upon it the light, or it may be the darkness, of our own minds; when we take it as it stands, and without interpretation,—the past, or at least the nobler passages of it, so come upon, possesses the charm of art, the appeal of what is finished and permanent. The disputative spirit dies in its presence. There is no question of fact; argument is not in point. These things were; these inspiring words were said; this noble death was died, this life well lived. We see and hear, as it

were, in a vision; we contemplate and are satisfied. And all the more are we satisfied if some art of the time has wrought upon the transiency of things; has taken over the words spoken, the feelings felt, the deeds done, and has added to them, not nobility or grace or beauty, but the permanence which comes of perfection. For the past is then, I repeat, like a statue or picture: authentic, stable, secure, changeless, and changelessly calm. And, being so, we are enabled to look upon it with a pure mind.

As I copy these words at an open window, the bells of St. Michael's sound softly against the incoming sea air,—for I write in the city of Charleston, in South Carolina.

The bells of the old church ring their distant peal, as I say, with an astonishing softness; the waves glitter and wash upon the wall of the Battery; the strong, fresh south wind blows; the palmettos toss their green spiked fans of foliage and rustle, loud and dry; and under the dark green of Live Oaks, on the Battery, I see and hear young people, laughing, teasing, and talking. Faint odors of acacia and orange blossoms are in the air, the flowers themselves unseen behind the high-walled gardens of those houses which are so irritating to the inquisitive Northern tourist; since, being of another time and taste than ours, they are built sideways to the street, almost as if the owners actually dared wish not to be seen by every passer-by in the more intimate moments of their leisure. But nowadays the clean, sunny streets of this end of the town are little troubled with passers-by, and less with the noise of traction engines or motors. Indeed, the quiet is such that the whistling of a distant mocking bird floats in at the window. And what a grace and dignity the town has, with its wide bay,—to the south

the low-wooded shore of the Isle of Pines, and to the northeast Sumter, looming over the turbid water, darkly blue in the haze of an April sea.

Very natural, it may be thought, in Charleston and with Fort Sumter in full view, to have fallen into a train of reflection on that spirit of extremism which follows on disparate and clashing ideals. Natural, with these surroundings, to dwell on the political fanaticism of the South, comparing it with the same spirit in the North.

But happily the world is full of surprises; and what I now seek to lay before the reader, and to interest him in, is a number of local and little-known records which in their sense are the reverse of everything extreme, bigoted, fanatical. These records are in the main memorial inscriptions and, displaying, as they do, a spirit of moderation and a great love of political justice, lead up inevitably to an historic scene which for a certain greatness of feeling would, I believe, be hard to parallel.

These records, epitaphs, and inscriptions are, many of them, composed upon obscure or forgotten men. They are, however, all of a public nature, and possess the interest which attaches to public memorials. And, as the reader will at once discover, they are composed in an admirable literary style. Let me dwell for a moment on the unique quality of their style, and the cause of this. It must be remembered that the art of laudation in stone is not the art of the novelist or the lyricist. Where a man graves words on marble, or incises them on granite, he must, first of all, be brief. If the lines are to have force, their felicity must consist in the "much in little" of the Roman phrase; the writer must say the main thing and have done. Furthermore, if he is celebrating public men or public events, the tone of his celebration must

itself be public. He must be general, downright, plain, and to the point. And as he is writing for those who stand, if they do not run, he will be unwise if he shall permit himself to be eccentric or obscure, or shall venture on what is too novel to be taken in at a glance. He must speak the language of the day. And clearly he cannot be subjective, intimate, and full of his own *ego*, however much his own *ego* may interest him. In short, the nature of the material on which the words are to be written, and the public occasion to which they are dedicated, condition his style,—color, or even, it may be said, create it.

It must be further remembered that this art of epitaph, —the art of laudation on stone,—is highly traditional, replete with reminiscence, and special to its occasion. Thus, in the things I have such pleasure in presenting to the reader, there are whole or half lines from Simonides, or echoes of the great Roman memorials in prose. I must, however, not fail to add that, as we read, we feel that much of what is written is conventional; that the praise is given in such way, for such qualities, as that expectation shall be gratified. On the other hand, the extraordinary and abiding interest of these memorial words I shall now beg to quote lies herein, that they convey the feelings of a time and a people with a great degree of felicity.

It must be understood that I am not setting out to praise the people of that period as being greater or wiser or nobler than the people of today. But they were in some sort different. And this difference is full of instruction, and even of inspiration. Thus, the Southerners of that time display a profound enthusiasm for the State as a necessary and ideal agent. Again, they express their relish of manly virtue in the most open and candid

way, reminding one in this of no one so much as Plutarch. And they lay a special emphasis of praise on habits or virtues which it would seem odd, or certainly old-fashioned, to mention in our day, let alone cut into the cold and permanent face of a piece of marble. For example, if the president of the Connecticut Coal and Iron Company died, and, having a stone on his grave, we read on it that "throughout his life he displayed the manly Virtues," the casual reader would feel it to be strangely said. Or if on the tombstone of an unknown youth, dying, let us say in Newark, in his twenty-second year, we read that "Integrity, candour, and courtesy uniformly characterized his life and conduct," we should, I think, pause in mild wonder at these citizens of Newark who think so loftily of courtesy that they praise the youthful possessor of it on his very tombstone.

No doubt, as I have said, these expressions are, in a measure, conventional, and conventions change. But, on the other hand,—and this is the vital point,—taken as praise, and when evidently sincere, these things indicate a certain general preference, in the scale of moral values, of the men who composed them, and for whom they were composed. Above all, they bear witness to the amazing like-mindedness of the Carolinians of that day.

Turning directly to the records themselves, we learn at once, and from the least important of them, that a young man was, in those remote times, expected to have a public career, not solely a business one. On one humble stone we read, "Devoted to the State: untiring in his Labours for His Townsmen." On another, "His Country was his first Thought"; on a third, "Successful in his Career as a Merchant, he was Liberal to the Arts, and

eager in the Service of his State." Simple and conventional enough; yet clearly the words reveal the general expectation that a man shall devote some measure of his time and energy to the service of the Commonwealth.

In reading these epitaphs, I could not but recall the words of a Southern statesman, words spoken many years ago. He was referring to the time previous to the Civil War. "South Carolina and Massachusetts produced so many great public men," he said, "so many more than did the other states, because in those two states young men were encouraged on all hands to aspire to a public career. It was not thought very well of a youth if he evinced no public concern. So, as soon as a young man showed he was something more or better than the rest of us, the rest of us made much of him." It would be easy to quote a dozen epitaphs exemplifying and supporting the sense of these words. "He was not False to the Expectation of his People." "Urged by all who knew him, he accepted Office to the detriment of his Private Fortune." "Fell in defence of his Country, Christ's faithful Soldier and Servant." But let me turn to something larger and more important, only asking the reader to remember that he is in the presence of one of the arts, even if a lesser art; and that these words so carefully selected, so brief and succinct, are really a sort of free verse in prose form; or, at all events, a prose of a highly condensed sort,—a prose from which every vague and useless word has been deleted.

Dying in his ninetieth year, John Julius Pringle was, in his day, a man of some note and performance in his city and state. Printed as they actually stand on the stone, the lines read, in part, as follows:—

HIS LIFE WAS SERVICE TO THE COMMONWEALTH.
HE WAS NOT LESS ADMIRER FOR HIS KNOWLEDGE,
WHICH WAS VARIOUS AND PROFOUND:
THAN FOR THOSE QUALITIES OF HEART AND MIND
WHICH MADE THAT KNOWLEDGE PRACTICALLY USEFUL.
PREFERRING THE CALM OF RETIREMENT
TO THE DISTINCTIONS OF PUBLIC LIFE,
HE RATHER SHUNNED THAN SOUGHT OFFICE:
AND WAS AS REMARKABLE FOR DECLINING,
AS MANY ARE FOR COURTING ITS HONORS.
BUT, THE APPOINTMENTS WHICH HE DID ACCEPT,
BOTH ELEVATED AND RESPONSIBLE,
WERE DISCHARGED WITH BECOMING ABILITY AND
FIDELITY.

This, if conventional in form and phrase, is at all events modest, collected, and succinct,—a man's character in brief, and chiefly his public service. The felicity of phrase is sufficiently apparent, and with this that public tone of which I have spoken.

On another stone, and in a churchyard distant from Charleston, there are the following few plain and feeling words, but this time not of a man who could be active for his people or the state. The words are in remembrance of a Negro slave whose Christian name was John,—this name being the only one on the tombstone, since his surname was that of his owner.

JOHN:
A FAITHFUL SERVANT
AND TRUE FRIEND:
KINDLY, AND CONSIDERATE:
LOYAL, AND AFFECTIONATE:
THE FAMILY HE SERVED
HONOURS HIM IN DEATH:
BUT, IN LIFE, THEY GAVE HIM LOVE:
FOR HE WAS ONE OF THEM.

And, a little removed from and lower than this epitaph itself:—

THERE SHALL BE NEITHER BOND NOR SLAVE.

A monument above Trumbull's grave in Charleston has, with much else, the following words:—

THE INTREPID AND SUCCESSFUL ASSERTOR
OF THE RIGHTS OF THE STATES.
THIS STONE IS ERECTED BY HIS COUNTRYMEN,
IN TESTIMONY OF THEIR GRATITUDE
FOR THE WISE, PERSEVERING AND BENEFICIAL
EXERTION
OF GREAT TALENTS,
IN THE SERVICE OF HIS COUNTRY.

Of another public man, whose name I omit, but a man of the same period, it is written:—

THE HOUR OF CONFLICT,
THE DAY OF DEFEAT,
THE YEARS OF OPPRESSION
BROUGHT TO HIS COURAGE
NO SLACKNESS;
AND TO HIS LOYAL SERVICE
NO ABATEMENT.

We can hardly fail to feel that the man who lies in that quiet grave possessed the quality of heroic persistence; but we must remark, too, that his fellow citizens honored him for what he possessed. And with what becoming sobriety they expressed this public praise! "The Hour of Conflict, the Day of Defeat." It would have been easy for a conquered people, prostrate and yet indignant, to have qualified "conflict" and "defeat" with two violent and enfeebling adjectives,—easy to have been what is called *flowery*. Instead of which we have it as

it stands:—brief, solid, weighty, strongly felt, well composed, and with sufficient dignity and point. It would naturally occur to a Northerner to wonder what these Southern men would have to say of less public characters. Well, the South Carolinians had a poet; his name was Timrod,—reckoned today, I imagine, as a very minor poet, and accordingly in the North known chiefly to literary students. His bust stands in a square of Charleston, and beneath it is this inscription:—

THROUGH CLOUDS AND THROUGH SUNSHINE,
IN PEACE AND WAR,
AMID THE STRESS OF POVERTY,
AND IN THE STORMS OF CIVIL STRIFE,
HIS SOUL NEVER FALTERED:
AND HIS PURPOSE NEVER FAILED.
TO HIS POETIC MISSION HE WAS TRUE TO THE END;
IN LIFE AND IN DEATH
HE WAS NOT DISOBEDIENT TO THE HEAVENLY VISION.

It is, I feel, not without interest that nothing is said of his poetry as achievement, nothing of his private life; that no mention is made of fame; that no complaint is leveled and that nothing is mourned. And how much at home we feel with these words. How much we feel that we are in the presence of a great people! It is, after all, not unworthy of remark that a people should praise its poets for their courage.

In the portico of St. Michael's Church you have on the wall:—

OLIVER H. MIDDLETON.
ONLY SON OF OLIVER H. AND SUSAN M. MIDDLETON;
VOLUNTEER IN THE CHARLESTON LIGHT DRAGOONS, 4TH.
REGIMENT SOUTH CAROLINA CAVALRY, WHO, IN HIS
19TH. YEAR FELL IN BATTLE NEAR COLD HARBOR, VA.
JULY 17, 1845—MAY 31, 1864.

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THIS TABLET RECORDS THE PATRIOTIC DEVOTION AND
HEROIC SPIRIT OF ONE WHO, DYING, DECLARED,
"I WOULD DIE AGAIN FOR MY COUNTRY."

Facing this there is a tablet upon which the lettering runs as quoted below. The author of the couplet is unknown to me.

TO THE CONFEDERATE DEAD OF CHARLESTON:
HOW GRAND A FAME THIS MARBLE WATCHES O'ER:
THE WAR BEHIND THEM; GOD'S GREAT PEACE BEFORE.

A little below this are the following words:—

THEY FOUGHT THE PATRIOT'S FIGHT;
THEY KEPT THE FAITH OF THEIR FATHERS;
THEY FELL ON THEIR STAINLESS SHIELDS.

When Robert Young Hayne died, Charleston celebrated her great protagonist with this inscription:—

BENEATH THIS MARBLE
LIE THE BONES AND ASHES OF ONE
TO WHOSE GREATNESS
NO SCULPTURED STONE CAN ADD.

NO SON OF SOUTH CAROLINA WAS EVER
MORE CHERISHED THAN THE SUBJECT OF THIS
MEMORIAL;

HIS HONORS WERE HEAPED UPON HIM
IN EARLY AND RAPID SUCCESSION.

There follow the many and important offices he held. South Carolina is then spoken of, and so, again, to the epitaph itself:—

HAVING ELOQUENTLY VINDICATED HER PRINCIPLES,
SHE ENTRUSTED HER HONOR TO HIS KEEPING,
LAYING UPON HIS SHOULDERS THE BURDEN OF HER
GOVERNMENT:

NO SOONER WAS THE SWORD SHEATHED
THAN SHE SUMMONED HIM TO ADVOCATE
THE INTERESTS OF HER AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE.
IN THE FULFILLMENT OF THESE TRUSTS
HE SACRIFICED HIS LIFE,
HAVING LIVED LONG ENOUGH FOR HIS OWN FAME:
HAVING DIED TOO SOON FOR HIS COUNTRY'S GOOD.

This, again, is in the conventional phraseology of the period, and yet it is not too much to say that the spirit of a whole people lives in the words. The character of a man is suggested; a race is portrayed. And, once more, how much at home we feel with these lines. How inevitably they appeal to us. There is, too, that certain sobriety of statement, which I feel we cannot too much admire; and with this sobriety there is a great degree of moderation in the praise accorded. And yet what ardor of feeling for the Commonwealth in the quotation, "Having lived long enough for his own Fame: having died too soon for his country's Good." Eloquent and able a creature as Hayne was, we cannot continue or revive his reputation today. But, for self-evident reasons, one sentence of his remains in the public memory: "The greatest of all evils is a government of unlimited powers."

To desert Charleston for a moment, there is in Warrenton, Virginia, a monument to a general of the Confederacy. This soldier is spoken of as having labored and fought, "not for Empire and Renown: but for Right and Commonwealth." A stone's throw from this grave there is a granite shaft, and on one face of it are the lines:—

TO THE CONFEDERATE DEAD:
SIX HUNDRED:
VIRGINIA'S DAUGHTERS TO VIRGINIA DEFENDERS

On another face is an adaptation of the famous line of Simonides: "Go tell the Southerners we lie here for the rights of their States." Following this is a line from Byron: "They never fail who die in a great cause," and on the fourth face of the stone: "God will judge the Right." The lines speak for themselves, but it may not be superfluous to indicate in passing that there is no argument about States' rights. The fact that these six hundred men died for these rights is stated simply as a fact; and we who read are touched. We may disbelieve in the advisability of the States having any rights whatever, and yet feel that a high and pure taste dictated the words. So a Frenchman standing on the Heights of Abraham may regret the loss of Canada; but if he is a man of feeling he will hardly fail to be moved, and even a good deal moved, by the brief sentence which, on that pillar of stone, celebrates at once the heroic death and the great achievement of Wolfe:—

HERE LIES WOLFE:—VICTORIOUS!

The Southern people, as is well known, made up their minds after the war was over that the cause for which their soldiers had fought and died was a lost cause, and was not something which could be revived. It was done with. After Appomattox, General Lee could not be described as anything but a Union man; and he carried the South with him. The velocity and completeness of the change were astounding, and testified to the immense common sense, the political and moral wisdom, of the people as a whole. I am frank to say I know nothing like it in history. For the Southern people did not cease to believe in the *right* of secession,—they simply faced the fact that they were beaten, and therefore they must

be true to the Union. And they were so. Accordingly, when they first began to raise monuments to their dead, they praised them, not for the cause they had espoused, but in the main, as we have seen, for their heroism, their sense of duty. There is, however, a monument in Columbus, upon which the words inscribed do speak of that cause, and speak of it with admirable self-restraint and dignity.

THIS MONUMENT
PERPETUATES THE MEMORY
OF THOSE WHO
TRUE TO THE INSTINCTS OF THEIR BIRTH,
FAITHFUL TO THE TEACHINGS OF THEIR FATHERS,
CONSTANT IN THEIR LOVE FOR THE STATE,
DIED IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTY.
WHO
HAVE GLORIFIED A FALLEN CAUSE
BY THE SIMPLE MANHOOD OF THEIR LIVES,
THE PATIENT ENDURANCE OF SUFFERING,
AND THE HEROISM OF DEATH.
LET THE STRANGER,
WHO MAY IN FUTURE TIMES
READ THIS INSCRIPTION
RECOGNIZE THAT THESE WERE MEN
WHOM POWER COULD NOT CORRUPT,
WHOM DEATH COULD NOT TERRIFY,
WHOM DEFEAT COULD NOT DISHONOR.
AND LET THEIR VIRTUES PLEAD
FOR JUST JUDGMENT
ON THE CAUSE IN WHICH THEY PERISHED.

The traditional style of these memorials,—that something of Roman which they have, or even, though more rarely, of Greek,—is plain enough. But there is an example, and an extraordinary one, of an epitaph deriving from another source. This occurs in the city of Savan-

nah. There is, in one of the public squares of that beautiful and now prosperous town, a shaft of stone dedicated, once more, to the men who gave their lives to the Confederacy, on which there is a simple and brief quotation from the Bible, the words being a part of the thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel,—that astonishing chapter in which the Hebrew Prophet endeavors to prove to the people of Israel that nothing is impossible to God, not even that He should raise the dead. The words thus quoted and engraved on the granite are these:—

COME FROM THE FOUR WINDS,
O BREATH!
AND BREATHE UPON THESE SLAIN,
THAT THEY MAY LIVE.

In order to appreciate these words, we have, of course, to recall that they were inscribed many years ago, at a time when the Southern States were wrecked; their economic structure shattered, their young men dead in battle; their civilization overthrown, and their hopes defeated,—at a time, therefore, when men's hearts were burning, when there must have been every temptation to say much more than the brief, poignant, and imaginative sentence which the men and women of that period actually preferred.

But even today the Southern people continues to abound in its tradition, composing its inscriptions with much the same self-restraint, much the same dignity. Its epitaphs,—in many examples, at least,—are as impersonal, as public in tone, and as concise as those of seventy years ago. And this is not without a degree of interest, since so much of the writing in the South has been done in a florid and Corinthian tone. The words I shall now

quote are modern, and were composed, I am told, within the decade. The monument which bears them stands in the cemetery at Arlington, commemorating once more the Confederate dead in battle.

To
OUR DEAD HEROES
BY
THE UNITED DAUGHTERS
OF THE CONFEDERACY.

NOT FOR FAME OR REWARD:
NOT FOR PLACE OF RANK:
NOT LURED BY AMBITION:
OR GOADED BY NECESSITY:
BUT IN SIMPLE
OBEDIENCE TO DUTY
AS THEY UNDERSTOOD IT:
THESE MEN SUFFERED ALL,
SACRIFICED ALL, DARED ALL!
AND DIED.

The historic event of which I spoke earlier, and to which these inscriptions very naturally lead up, was one which occurred in Charleston in the spring of that year which saw the battles of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. But previous to the narration of it I must speak of the man whose death was the occasion of it, and quote the lines placed upon his tombstone.

There lived in Charleston before and during the first years of the Civil War a certain James Lewis Pettigru, a lawyer and a public man. Knowledge of him has for a long time been confined to the South, or to students of history. His grave is in the yard of St. Michael's Church; and, the epitaph on the stone at the head of it,—an epitaph which, I understand, has long been known and ad-

mired by the few,—awakening the interest of the present writer, he sought out among his older acquaintances in Charleston those who should give him a first-hand account of the gentleman who was the subject of it. Some few persons had seen the man in their boyhood, seen him on the street and in court; their fathers were his personal friends. But, apart from these intimate narratives of eyewitnesses, the man's memory floated in the general atmosphere.

This could hardly be otherwise, since for more than thirty years Pettigru was active in all matters of common interest. Standing high at the bar, he spoke on almost all public occasions. In a time of eloquent men he was among the most eloquent. His probity, industry, and the powers of his mind were of such a nature that there was no office to which he could not have aspired. Office appears to have been little to his taste; but he was a leader in his own way, popular with all classes in the community, rich and poor, black and white,—in short, with the whole town and state.

And this is the more remarkable in that Pettigru was a wit; and, as we all know, the power of illuminating the folly and unreason of mankind by those flashes of pure rationality which we call wit is not ordinarily a popular trait. Such men are more feared than loved, more admired than trusted. There was, however, that in this man's make-up which brought men to his feet, and kept them there. Perhaps it was that Pettigru's nature was open, ardent, and generous to a fault. He was outgoing and warm-hearted; and, though he knew men for what they are, he loved them and showed it. There was, in short, nothing of repression or restraint about the man. He expressed himself, his views and his emotions, freely,

and with force. And at times, his mind overcast and dark with apprehension for the future of his country, and his whole being in a storm, he loosed the powers of his invective,—those powers of irony, sarcasm, and intellectual contempt of which I made mention.

Such was this man, and such his popularity. But popularity is a flower that withers overnight. Mankind in the gross mass is fickle: if the object of its liking pursues a course opposed to its ideas, its interests as it conceives them, he is reprobate and to be discarded.

Not without amazement, therefore, we learn that, living and working in the very seat of Secessionist feeling, and supporting throughout his entire career, as he did, the Federal Union, Pettigru yet lost nothing of the abundant and glowing regard in which he was held by the people of his state.

There were, to be sure, other men, a small but capable company of them, who were Unionists on principle and labored unceasingly for their cause. Pettigru was, however, decidedly the leader of the movement; and he led it with all his mind and all his heart. To specify his opinions, it appears that he held slavery to be wrong, and a grave misfortune to the South; but he was not for that reason an abolitionist. He thought, apparently, that these sudden, drastic and unconsidered solutions of a problem at once moral and economic create as much evil as they abolish, saddling aftertimes with a problem different, indeed, from the original one, but no less fraught with evil. He seems to have cherished a truly Anglo-Saxon respect for justice, law, precedent, and custom, and to have held the opinion that if slavery were left alone it would, in the end, abolish itself.

But he was utterly opposed to the extension of the

system. He spoke in public and in private, again and again, of the madness of Secession, and the infatuation of the people of his state. It is said that on the occasion of a political dinner he was imprudently asked to drink a toast to South Carolina, and replied, in no very pacific tone, as he rose, "Certainly. To South Carolina: and may she recover her senses!"

Passion, it need hardly be said, ran high at the time,—the years between 1840 and the outbreak of war. Great financial interests were involved; the system of slavery; the fate of the Union; the future of the South,—its prosperity, the form and character of its civilization. It might readily be imagined that such a man, a man so opposed to the popular feeling of the day, would sooner or later have been stoned in the streets of Charleston, as Whittier was in those of Boston. Not a few of the Southern sympathizers in the North,—the gentlemen called Copperheads,—suffered at the hands of their fellow citizens of the opposite, the Union party. And Pettigru was, relatively, in the same position in South Carolina. He was, so to say, a Southern Copperhead. His sympathies were with the Union men.

It might naturally be imagined that he would be deprived of office, or certainly that he would not have had office thrust upon him, previous to the outbreak of war, and assuredly not after that event. We should guess that he would live under a shadow and die neglected; and, if he died before the close of the conflict, that his funeral would be private, and some degree of obloquy would follow him to his grave.

Pettigru did indeed die before the war was ended, though not before the Secessionist Legislature had elected and appointed him, the implacable foe of Secession, to

digest and codify the laws of the state. And this legislature renewed the appointment the following year.

He lies, as I have said, in the yard of St. Michael's, the stone at the head of his grave bearing the epitaph mentioned,—the spelling a little difficult to decipher now, as the years have obscured the lettering with green lichen.

The epitaph reads as follows:—

JAMES LEWIS PETTIGRU

BORN AT

ABBEVILLE MAY 10TH 1789

DIED AT CHARLESTON MARCH 9TH 1863

JURIST. ORATOR. STATESMAN. PATRIOT.

FUTURE TIMES WILL HARDLY KNOW
HOW GREAT A LIFE

THIS SIMPLE STONE COMMEMORATES:
THE TRADITION OF HIS ELOQUENCE,
HIS WISDOM, AND HIS WIT MAY FADE:

BUT HE LIVED FOR ENDS MORE DURABLE THAN FAME.
HIS LEARNING ILLUMINATED THE PRINCIPLES OF LAW:
HIS ELOQUENCE WAS THE PROTECTION OF THE POOR
AND WRONGED.

IN THE ADMIRATION OF HIS PEERS:
IN THE RESPECT OF HIS PEOPLE:
IN THE AFFECTION OF HIS FAMILY,
HIS WAS THE HIGHEST PLACE:

THE JUST MIND
OF HIS KINDNESS AND FORBEARANCE,
HIS DIGNITY AND SIMPLICITY,
HIS BRILLIANT GENIUS AND HIS UNWEARIED INDUSTRY.

UNAWED BY OPINION,
UNSEDUCED BY FLATTERY:
UNDISMAYED BY DISASTER,
HE CONFRONTED LIFE WITH ANTIQUE COURAGE:
AND DEATH WITH CHRISTIAN HOPE.

IN THE GREAT CIVIL WAR
 HE WITHSTOOD HIS PEOPLE FOR HIS COUNTRY:
 BUT HIS PEOPLE DID HOMAGE TO THE MAN
 WHO HELD HIS CONSCIENCE HIGHER THAN THEIR PRAISE:
 AND HIS COUNTRY
 HEAPED HER HONOURS ON THE GRAVE OF THE PATRIOT,
 TO WHOM, LIVING,
 HIS OWN RIGHTEOUS SELF-RESPECT SUFFICED
 ALIKE FOR MOTIVE AND REWARD.

NOTHING IS HERE FOR TEARS, NOTHING TO WAIL,
 —NOTHING BUT WELL AND FAIR,
 AND WHAT MAY QUIET US IN A LIFE SO NOBLE.

This inscription was, I learned, composed by several hands, and in part, at least, by Northern admirers of Pettigru. As it was set up shortly after the close of the war, we may suppose that partisan passion had somewhat cooled; and thus our wonder that such words could be placed on any stone of that city, at that time, may be somewhat diminished. Doubting a little, then, whether the lassitude and indifference of after-war days were not the cause of this permission rather than a sense of justice or a continuing, obstinate regard for the dead man, we naturally ask ourselves what happened. How was he regarded at the time of his death and funeral? His death occurred, as his epitaph tells us, in the thick of the war, the funeral taking place March 10, 1863. His body was, I understand, laid out in the Court House, the face being uncovered. An immense crowd gathered and viewed the corpse. Men and women, and among them many slaves, attended the service, following the body to its grave. The only business of the day, in Charleston, was this funeral. The shops were closed. Nothing further was done.

Some weeks later the Charleston bar held a memorial meeting. Once more there was a great concourse of his former fellow citizens. As the room would hold but a few, the people thronged the steps of the building and extended, in their mass, into the street. The leading men of the city and state,—lawyers, statesmen, soldiers, orators,—were within doors, and spoke in praise of Pettigru. And their eulogies appear to have been as open, sincere, and unstrained as we should have expected them to be the reverse. Yet among those who spoke there must have been men pledged to the doctrine of Secession,—life-long, bitter opponents of the man they mourned, who, doubtless, had received hard blows at his capable hands.

Recalling those things which would unavoidably affect the temper and mood of the men who thus celebrated Pettigru, we must not forget that there was almost immediate danger threatening their city. A fleet of iron-clads was at that moment anchored in Northern waters, preparing to bombard and reduce Charleston. Had the speakers of the occasion delayed but a few weeks, the town would have been on fire from shells thrown into it; and the ringing gallop of mounted infantry detailed to extinguish the flames, with the reverberations of the concussion of bombs, would have drowned the voice of their praise. But if they were safe for the moment, and perhaps not fully informed, there were other considerations which must have saddened and embittered their minds and which could very easily have rendered them intolerant. There was no speaker present who did not well know that the issue of the prolonged struggle was uncertain. Hardly a man of them but had lost some youthful member of his family. All Charleston was in mourning, severely impoverished, cruelly anxious, strain-

ing nerve and courage to meet the prolonged trial of war and the agonies of personal loss. These were the circumstances of the time and the inevitable emotions of the hour. But the meeting took place. The enemies of Pettigru spoke. The dead leader of a militant minority against Secession was eulogized by the supporters of Secession. His enemies expressed their admiration and their grief.

The scene is surely not lacking in greatness and magnanimity. It could, however, hardly have taken place except at a time and in a place where the people, all classes of them, cherished the same moral and political ideals. There was doubtless no one present who did not admire eloquence and value probity; who did not believe in the State and in service to the State; or who could find anything strange in the phrase, "He confronted Life with antique courage and Death with Christian Hope." There were none there who did not believe in patriotism as they understood it; none, doubtless, who did not respond to the sentiment, "His People did homage to the Man who held his Conscience higher than their Praise."

That time is long past. Pettigru is a name. But, misty and remote as it all is, we cannot, I think, escape the feeling that a people flourishes and becomes great only when its moral unity is intact; only, or most, when its citizens are in a high degree *like-minded*.

FALSE CULTURE

THE colloquy took place some years ago, in the Café du Dôme, *Boule-Miche*, in Paris: that is to say, in a restaurant of the Latin or Student quarter. I suppose the freckled and frail-looking youth, with yellow eye-lashes, had come there to imbibe Culture. I supposed so, from his cravat, from the display of a certain nervous interest in his surroundings, and because, in questioning the aged man of forty-eight who had chanced to seat himself at the same table with him, the questions were all directed to this one point.

He was eager to know how this Culture was to be acquired. Apparently the youth looked upon it as something you put on your self, on your mind, or on your æsthetic Soul;—you got it, and put it on, as you spread butter on bread. But, the bread was not your previous solid education: it was just your unenlightened, aspirational Sensibility that you smeared this divine butter over.

He seemed a nice enough boy, except that his Adam's apple was so prominent, and that in a way he looked female of sex, but very lank and with large bony hands. He seemed to think, as I say, that this delicate essence, this thing Culture, had no connection with man's life as a whole. It consisted, perhaps, in a knowledge of Sèvres, or of the vowel-colors in certain poems of Verlaine, or Stepan Georg; or of the brush-work of an infinitely minor painter of pastoral scenes, who flourished,

so to say, in the year 1726;—or, of an unbounded enthusiasm for a new school of French poets who wrote the most poignant things without using the verb.

He told me he had been born and raised in Ohio. But, thank God, that was over. At last, he was in Paris and he hoped his table-companion would lend him a guiding hand in this matter of Culture.

"How had *he* acquired or contacted the thing?" The table-companion was not at all sure he had contacted it. But the younger man was not to be fubbed off; "I want to get cultured," he said. "I am twenty-four. I was to the State College. I speak French."

He did use the words of the French language, but with the pronunciation and inflections of his native tongue and town. "I expect you're an artist," he continued. "How did you get that way?" Had I come to Paris for Culture? I ignored the last question and replied that I had wasted a great deal of time in the pursuit of false culture. "What's *that*?" he inquired.

Feeling that it was not quite fair to the youth just to look at him with a veiled glance, and wonder how he could at all be; and feeling that in a way I owed him candor, I began speaking to the point, when he interrupted me with an admiring glance and a long finger leveled at some one across the room:—"That lady over there dances at the 'Cabaret des Innocents,' and do you know she's got her whole body painted black, with a red skull and crossbones on her stomach; and when she undulates."—On this the word of the Lord came to me and I spoke: "I am under the strong impression that you don't know what Culture is. I did not, at your age. Our countrymen in general conceive of it only as frills and fol-de-rol: as something dispensable and of no mo-

ment. Matthew Arnold, a great man, whose work wears well, gave the concept a black eye. He used the word 'Culture' as an Abstraction. That is, if I remember rightly, he employs the word in such a way that there is no reference to its origin in a metaphor.—Well, Lord Bacon writes of 'The culture and manurance of the mind.' " "That's disgusting," said the young man. "Possibly," said I, "but that is what he writes. The mind is like soil. It must be manured, plowed, harrowed, rolled, and sown with seed: in short, *cultivated*. Keep the metaphor in view, and your ideas will clarify, so that not even Oscar Wilde will be able to muddy your understanding of the matter. Of course, at times, owing to the exigencies of thinking, we are obliged to employ the word in the sense of an abstract noun; but the point I make is, that both the mind, and the character, demand intensive cultivation, since wanting this, their sleeping or potential powers remain locked up. The soil may be good; it remains barren. But culture of the earth is always with a known end in view. We have first to discover the nature and composition of the soil; what it will best bear, and any defects it has. It is then cultivated to the end of corn, cabbages, or tobacco." I was under the impression that the young man winced, but paying no attention, continued: "So with the mind, the character, and even the spiritual nature. It follows that a man can be cultivated in music, and nothing else; or cultivated in the plastic Arts, but not in literature. Or, he can 'know the best that has been said and written,' and yet be incapable of knowing one tune from another, or perceiving the beauty of a Titian. Clearly in this latter case the man is uncultivated in music and art. So much

for Buckingham!" said I, thoughtlessly, for the quotation confused the young man a good deal, as well it might.—

"So much for the nature of Culture."

The young man was about to put forward something, but, ignoring this, I continued in the same shamelessly didactic tone:

"The world is full of false and trivial Culture. I, myself, wasted years,—but, see now, how simple the matter is. Apart from shelter and food, the needs of men are not many, or limitless; but, they are exigent, and profound; and, these needs are: intellectual, as of truth; or moral, as of a way of life; or they are social, as when men are compelled to combine and govern themselves, and do so. But, in the very midst of the effort to attain these things, men desire something more; and the something more is Culture. The naked idea or conception or belief is not enough. There must be music, statues, paintings, Parthenons, epic-poems, what you please. The Ten Commandments are not enough, and so you have the Psalms. The New Testament is not enough, not for the various and insatiable soul of man; and so you have Bach's Passion music. But,—and this is the main thing,—all this world of beauty, form, feeling, and idea is based on knowledge of something: on education, and the something which Culture, whether it be purely intellectual or purely æsthetic, develops and adds warmth and life to, is always of grave importance to mankind. Thus the enjoyment of eloquence is a matter of Culture: but the great orator does not discourse on the relative fineness of table napkins. Men have carved cherry-stones, but their names are not Phidias or Angelo."

"I don't guess I really get you," said the youth, sipping his *sirop* through a straw. I thought he spoke rather

sadly. I lit another cigarette and pulled my mind together. "Look at it this way," I said. "You're out for Culture; that is, for perfecting your powers, or some of them. Well, what you set out to so animate, enlarge, and perfect, is some capability, or taste,—it may be the capability of enjoying and understanding Virgil, or the taste for Burgundy. In the latter case your palate must be educated: in the former you must know something in order to feel anything. You must know something even though not much, of Rome. But what you must mainly understand is men as they are; human life, as it actually stands. You must know the great primal needs of men. Of course, *this*," and here I indicated the various American, Turkish, Moroccan, Japanese and Italian habitués and frequenters of the Tavern: "This is not human life; not the great Stream of it;—this is just an amusing Backwater, bearing its iridescent and irresponsible bubbles. These people at these tables are not busy supplying mankind or themselves with the fruits of Culture: that is with what it must have, or sink to a lower level. The crew here is dedicated to producing things that are not needed; things exquisitely superfluous and engagingly irrelevant."

"Where do you get all that," said the young man in a sort of irritation.

"I'll tell you where I got it. When I was a young chap, I spent some time in a part of our country which was still in the wilderness state. It was a huge patch of the Old Frontier left there; left over. The railroads had cut around it, and were hundreds of miles away. It was mountainous. Backwoods. Primitive. Oh, much more so than I can possibly tell you,—you would not believe it. The area, the scope of it was immense. Game

abundant. The settlers lived, one here, one there: ten miles of forest between. No, they were not 'po' whites,' not even Mountain People of the sort that inhabit the Blue Ridge. They were not, because, though secluded and isolated, they had suffered no degeneration. They were the finest, most capable, chaste, virile, energetic and high-spirited people you can imagine."

"They sound horrifyingly dull."

"Naturally they do."

"What took you, or rather what induced you, to stay there?"

"I like the wilderness. I like, or I did, then, the roughest life possible. I hankered for it. It was a passion."

"Tiens, tiens!" said the youth with his singular French accent.

"Dear me!—— Well, I had the thought you had a passion for Culture."

"I don't recall having suffered in that way," I replied, —and most unfairly. "I had an extreme hunger for understanding the basis of things,—you take me?"

"I do not."

"Well, I was intellectually curious about two matters: first: The essential and permanent in men; what does not change. Life as it is, forever and always. And second: The reason for civil society; why it has to be; what makes it a necessity; and how it comes about,—the procedure."

"I'm an Amorphist; I believe in Fluidity," said my companion.

"Splendid," I replied; "and now listen. That country, at that time, was a piece of the Old Frontier; it was the Pioneer period in modern times; complete individualism:

perfectly fluid and amorphous. That is, every family was for itself. No law. No nothing. A straightout go-as-you-please, and live or die, it's up to you. But, presently as other Settlers came in,—and some bad men among them,—well, then, women were raped; men killed from behind trees; cabins burned, and the hogs driven off:—all very awkward! So the good men got together."

"The good men?"

"In the frontier country there are only two kinds of men: the good and the bad."

"How horrible."

"They got together, and held council; appointed a sheriff and posse, and killed or drove out the bad men."

"Actually killed them?"

"My impression was they were dead: and then, they turned to, and, oh, well, they elected a Judge,—and, but for the railroads beginning to open up the country on its outer edge, they would have gone ahead and founded a Republic."

"I can't see why they'd do a thing like that."

"They did it to protect their hogs and their women."

"I don't see the necessity. I hate hogs."

"Naturally you do," I said.

"But, to answer your previous questions: I learned there, by what occurred,—and it was not at all pretty,—the basis of civil order and form, the *reason* for Law. And a little, too, of what men are like when there are no police about. In other words, in as far as I was capable of receiving impressions, and reflecting upon them with any justice, I learned to know life as it is among the tribes of men in all ages. How little depends on book-learning: how much on experience; and, too, it was borne in on me that, if book-learning there be, the important

thing is that men should have few books, those the greatest, and should know them thoroughly. And once more I learned how much experience is, or may be all in all;—and how deeply related it is to a man's Culture. But not his Culture in carving cherry-stones. In short I had a lesson in what might be termed 'elementals.' ”

“Look here,” said the young man straightening up a little from his lolling position and turning a suspicious and somewhat disliking look on me, “look here, what I mean by culture is a—a thing, which has just simply nothing to do with anything but just culture.”

He tossed off his *Sirop* with an air of enagement. “You seem to think that this Culture here,” his head described a half circle indicating the room, now blue with smoke, and noisy in seven languages, “that this culture here is no account, because it has nothing to do with hogs and women,——”

“Oh, not the latter,” said I, hastily. “What I think is that seven-tenths of our American Culture is a varnish applied to ignorance; or, it is a parlor prettification; or something which passes a tedious hour, like the young lady's stomach; or it is the skillful representation of the repellent, the vulgar, or the sickly; or it is the delicately lubricious, harmfully served to stimulate a jaded and sedentary appetite.”

“You hurt me,” said the lad.

“That's good,” I replied laughing, “you're getting on. What you want to do is to read Homer, and reflect an hour for every five minutes you read. The Old Man would help you.”

I raised my glass, he nodding with a faint and odd, but now friendly grin, and at once the social atmosphere seemed to have improved.

"Well," he said, "now, I'll tell you: what you got down in that locality there, that place, it doesn't apply. We're all trying to escape from that sort of stuff. Why mention it? As for experience of plain, simple what do you call 'em, elements, being education,—they didn't educate me none, and they wouldn't educate anybody."

"They educated Washington and Lincoln," I replied.

"Washington and Lincoln?" cried the boy, and added with a certain asperity: "may I ask you to tell me what such men as those two have to do with Education or Culture?"

WASHINGTON AND LINCOLN

IF a literate and highly intelligent American mechanic, —and how intelligent such a man can be, we all know,—should take it into his head to read Benvenuto Cellini's account of his own life and doings; his work and his devotion to it, as well as his devotion to revenge, he would shortly, I think, feel at least a little confused and at sea. And if he continued the reading there is more than a likelihood that the man would feel outraged in his moral susceptibility. But, even if the life our American mechanic sought to understand was not that of the lively, gifted and unprincipled Benvenuto; even if he turned his attention on, let us say, Grimm's *Life of Michelangelo*; or some biography of Gregory VII, or Sabbatier's *Life of St. Francis*, still, I think we shall all agree that he would not penetrate very far into what he was reading, and that his judgment upon all of it would not be of outstanding value.

But, confront this same mechanic, or farmer, or perhaps clerk in some small town, with the moral, economic and other problems which the system of Slavery presented, in 1850; and with the public actions and orations of Webster and Calhoun; and again, I think we shall agree, that the man's mind would, at least, be at home and work freely. It would be and do so, because the moral attitude, the social and other ideals would be familiar, and, accordingly, the man would be capable of a valid judgment. Nor is it simply that the questions of 1850 are nearer in

time and thereby more comprehensible. The plain American of today, were he suddenly to find himself listening to Einar's plea for liberty, on the Law-hill, in Iceland of the year 1024 of our era; and called upon to decide as between King Olaf and the Icelanders, would have no difficulty whatever in coming to a decision; and the same man confronted with the Barons on Runnymede and asked for his voice in the matters under consideration would deal with them as easily, if not as wisely, as the armored Knights amongst whom he had fallen, and who in their outward appearance would appear so little like his acquaintances at home. It would be thus, as I say, because the man would be perfectly familiar with the ideas of the Icelanders, or Barons, and in a measure his attitude would be theirs. Aside from the worship of Thor, and some difficulty he might feel in regard to the Madonna, the man would be moving within the sphere of his own Culture; and, out of this sphere men are not able to step, save as a freedom attained through a long process of acquisition, and reflection; and so, gradually, of understanding and sympathy with alien things. It must not, however, be forgotten that the great mass of men remaining ignorant of other moral or spiritual worlds than their own, remain strong; undivided in their allegiance; unshaken by doubts; and, as is largely the case with the native American, great continuers and sustainers.

Men, as we know, are not universally wise, nor does Democracy demand this. Much more it demands coolness, long-headedness, the spirit of Tolerance, carried as far as may be advisable in each case; a ready understanding of human character, and, finally, that the people shall be of such temper and virtue that they are able to use

their men of genius to some purpose. Cool consideration, virtue and the feeling for character have thus more to do with the success of a Democratic Republic than the capability of the individual to form just conclusions upon successive questions of import.

Thus, the American, whom I pictured in a rough and ready way, as being a mechanic, is humanly constructed and thus he operates. He has been nearer right more times than any class in our country. Fashionable society, even when tolerably educated, the scholarly class, people of much or many cultures, the fanatics of Reform, even the politicians, have gone lamentably astray, and worshiped in the Oak Groves of this or that Folly, while the plain American, remaining obstinately true to his simple Faith, his code, habit of mind and aim, has elected, re-elected, supported and held up the hands of our greatest Statesmen. The political ideals of Jefferson, of Webster, of Clay and Calhoun; their characters as public men, with their motives and aims, were understood of the people of their time, and would be by the people of ours. The same thing holds true, though in a much higher degree, in regard to Washington and Lincoln.

Indeed, it must, on any consideration, be felt, I think, that the recorded words and actions of these two men are, as it were, a Mirror, on the reflective face of which the American looks, and sees not them, but himself. That is, of course, his ideal self. He may, indeed, find their characters by no means as plain and simple as it would flatter him to have them be, or appear to be. But, their public actions suffice him. He stops there.

If however, as men curious of human life and character we go further than he does; if we read in detail the lives of these two Presidents, I think we shall feel, that

they are like other Americans, yes; but are also singularly unlike. And much of this unlikeness consists in the fact that both Washington and Lincoln were possessed of natures which we cannot easily fathom. There is an element of mystery in both men.

But mystery, in this sense, is not a popular characteristic, it does not aid a man in his public career. A statesman can, naturally, not afford to be a riddle to his followers. What, then, was the nature of this something mysterious, this something not easily intelligible? And how has it been regarded by the people in general?

In the case of the earlier man his deportment being that of the gentleman, or perfected human being of his period, many writers tell us that he cannot be comprehended; we can never know him, as we know the man on the street, because of the elaboration, coldness and artificiality of the exterior man. But, in truth, what conceals Washington from us is not anything of the exterior; not the 18th century formality, not even his sword, breeches and cue. Cicero had the perfected, the polished manners of his day and wore a voluminous toga. Yet he is as easy to know as the man living next door, who waters his grass-plot, on Thursdays at five thirty, in his shirt-sleeves. Voltaire is a man plain to be understood, despite his wig, buckles, cynicism, sarcasm and his detestation of Christianity, whereas, with the great First and the great Seventh President, there is something problematic, and far to seek. We may admire, like, sympathize with them; but, not without an effort, shall we *know* them; not without thought, and, assuredly not unless we have no inconsiderable experience of life; of men and events.

To make any headway in the consideration of char-

acter we have, at the outset, to recall what a profound thing it is; and how various it can be; how deeply it is rooted in race and culture; and, turning our mind to men in general, by whom a given character is judged, how impossible it is for the people of a nation, stepping outside their own moral and other culture, to honor and accept the exponents of an alien ideal. We Americans, for example, do not see our own image, our own temperament, or in any way perceive our ideal man, and our scheme of morals, in the anonymous author of the 109th psalm; or in Alcibiades, or Loyola, or Lenin, or Mussolini.

Taking the lesser men of our own country, the mass of us are not moved to hero-worship, nor even to more than cool admiration for so much giftedness, so much energy displayed, when we read the lives and words of Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison; the one a past-master of the word spoken to public assemblies; the other a fiery and most formidable journalist, to ends which he held to be of paramount importance. Both of them were moral and political extremists. Both of them Old Testament men. Rigorous, rigid, violent; eager to stir up strife; wanting in the sense of justice; and humane in feeling only when and where it suited them to be so.

We acknowledge the gift, the energy, the devotion to an ideal;—but, the men are not *our sort of man!*

This sense of Kinship, of moral and other sympathy between the mass of men and the leaders they choose to follow, is the most natural, but also, the most necessary thing in the world. For without it there can be no unity of sentiment or aim. Nothing gets itself done. Leaders are tossed up and pushed down. The multitude welters and wallows in its myriad helplessness. It is pushed and wrenched hither and thither, as the granite and clay

of the earth at the hands of an earthquake. But, in neither case is anything accomplished. "The very birds of the air have their leaders, but my people have none."

There is, in this connection, a further and very far-reaching consideration. Looking about and above them for practical and successful men, who yet are devoted to the Commonwealth, and whom, therefore, they can admire and imitate, the youth of the country, the men in process of fermentation and growth, if they discover no such characters, are so much the more put to it to come to themselves. A nation is thus well-found, when it possesses some one or two great human figures whom it regards as its exponents of moral and other perfection. Such men, as we all know, have their effect; they not only are the authors of this or that law, or the Victor in some battle on which hangs the destiny of their people; they are also living protagonists of ideals believed in. And, when dead, they yet live as Heroes, Saints, or, at least as the happy examples of what is most desirable. But as religious ideals when they are popularized are subject to a progressive simplification and deterioration, so, too, are the characters of the great Benefactors of mankind; and for the same reason. They must be made over, re-formed, rendered plain and comprehensible, if they are to continue to serve as models. The process is one of deification; the man is simplified into a God. As we all know, this fate overtook the memory of Washington, and for long he appeared as a marble Statue of unruffled Perfectness. We must resist this process of *marbilization*, since it destroys the very object it seeks to exalt. Lincoln has not escaped this distortion, or rectification of obliquity.

The average American understands Lincoln's attitude

on the question of the Union, and Washington's on the question of our independence of Great Britain. What he fails to understand in the two statesmen is their personal, their intimate characters. And, accordingly, he alters these, innocently, to suit himself. And, not only the average man. I have known statesmen who conventionalized, as it were, regularized the character of the man of Sangaman country, to suit their own taste in the matter. This, too, turns the man to stone.

On the other hand, and recently, men have written of the Father of his Country in another temper, desiring not so much to heroize and magnify, as to minimize and detract. If these writers had expressed their dislike, their hatred, even,—for it is clearly that,—of Washington, in a downright, open and manly way; without veils and concealments, what they would have written would be worth consideration.

A plain, honest statement of a man's distaste for some historic figure, is respectable, not because of the distaste, but because of the honesty and candor with which it is expressed. Iconoclasm may be necessary. Men are much in the habit of burning incense before idols made with hands,—or made with imagination. But, what we have from the writers I refer to, is something covert, something suggested rather than said, insinuated rather than expressed. The truth is, a certain new kind of American has come, recently, into being; whose most salient characteristic is that he hates, fears, or is uncomfortable with everything that is, and most of what has been in the world, and specially in America. But, such a wholesale disadmiration is hardly to be taken seriously. We suspect a want of character, some envy, or some inability to wrestle with life itself, since a distaste for so many

men, and for such diverse things; for Washington, Franklin, Patrick Henry, Madison, Jay, Paul Jones, Jonathan Edwards, the Puritans, the pioneers; for the poor, the educated, and the cultured; for the eighteenth century, and the seventeenth; for the Bill of Rights, the negro, common courtesy, and the shoe-buckle,—a distaste, I repeat, for all these men and things, must surely have its source in some sickness of the *psyche*; no doubt, we shall have more of this passionate malady of disadmiration, and with time, it may be more reasoned, more candid, more frankly expressed:—and when that time comes, it will be possible and well worth while to seek out its underlying causes, and specify these.

But, if we, not being great and conventional senators, nor the heroizing crowd, nor, yet the recent writers I have touched on, seek diligently for a closer and truer understanding of such men as Washington and Lincoln, we ask,—in view of their immense performance, and in recalling the further achievement of character in each case,—we must ask to be told of their early education. What moulded and made the boy; what developed these disparate faculties? What fortunate rain fell, timely, on the human soil? The heat of what Sun caused them to put forth such great things and so profusely? Were they brought up in populous and highly civilized cities? What were they taught, how disciplined? What of formative experience was there?

And, here, perhaps, we open the *New York Times* and reading the report of what took place on Lincoln's birthday, we come on the words of one of our great political figures: "Lincoln had everything against him. His early environment was one of squalor.—His sordid, narrow and stupefying surroundings. There was nothing to

aid him in his effort to rise.”— More amazed than impressed with this passage, we open a book about Washington and learn that, “he had no education.— His education was totally inadequate.— He was never a cultural man. His spelling remained incorrect.—”

So, we remark to ourselves, these great doers of things were not prepared, trained, instructed and disciplined:—they did what they did on a basis of ignorance; nothing in his stupefying environment aiding the one; and, the other was hampered through life by incorrect spelling. The soil was sown with pebble-stones and thistles; it brought forth corn and olives in abundance.

A mere, systematic inquiry into the instruments of education employed on the mind of each child or youth, at the periods involved, even if possible, would avail us but little. Knowledge of the grammar which the one boy had used on him, or of the Arithmetic mastered to whatever extent by the other, would not help us far on the road. More depends on the men who instructed them, but, these men are somewhat nebulous figures. Even, however if the progress of inquiry along that path were not blocked, the more realistic method in all cases where we seek to know what a man’s education has been, is to state impartially those things in which the man himself excels;—in plain words, what he did better than other men; and also, what in himself, he was, which was plainly beyond and superior to the rest of mankind: and, draw our conclusion. There is no paradox here. The great performance implies great preparation. Moral character itself is the result of living among men. The younger Pitt was a great speaker and statesman at twenty-one, and we know how this came about. Lord Chatham educated his son, personally, and insistently, to that end. The *char-*

acter of Julius Cæsar was formed in a hard school; but it was formed. The dissolute society of Rome, wealth, liberty, travel, early command, and hardship in soldiering in barbarous countries, were so many teachers; so much influence. Take the matter in its simplest form. If a man can use an axe to any real purpose, this dexterity has been acquired, and certainly, not by a course in trigonometry. Or, take it in its highest; few of us, perhaps, are conversant with the early training of Leonardo;—but, being aware of some of the results of that training, we conclude his education in art could not have been intolerably defective. The negro of the Black Belt in Georgia has, frequently, received no education whatever, as we white people rate education; that is, as so much book-learning. But, that negro, has from earliest infancy received a musical culture of whatever musical faculty was in him, the equal of which the Universities of the world could not provide him.

Let me be bold, then, to ask, as if the question had never been previously put, nor ever admirably answered and by the most scholarly of historians: What manner of men were these two? What shining qualities were theirs? In what did they excel?

A man of Lincoln's character, and ability proceeds, necessarily from the depths, from the very bosom and brain of the race. He is not a chance-product. The only chance was in the long series of well-assorted and fortunate unions between the men and women, his forbears. One bad "cross" would have ruined the future Lincoln. But, most of us, having granted this heredity, or indeed not having granted it at all, fall back on the word *Genius*, or on the idea of something providential, and inquire no further into causes. The mass of pious

and intelligent men, having spoken the word Providence, picture Lincoln as a very simple machine.

The modern psychologist, though he would prefer to express the matter in another terminology, will not, I believe find fault with the notion that men of the highest order of genius; that is, men who unite the originative mind with high character, are examples of a principle: the principle of the multiple and diverse in unity. In such men the multiplicity is both of gift and moral qualities. The unity may be acquired, as when a man with a short-temper, achieves an habitual control over it; or, it may consist in something much more profound: namely, in a slow, general, progressive harmonization of the discordant inner desires and passions. Such a process of bringing the manifold Self to oneness, and hence to harmony of action and ideal can be seen in Goethe. The absence of such process in Coleridge.

A brief study of the lives of three great Frenchmen, all of them men of one and the same period, would more clearly convey the conception I have in mind than any array of abstract words. In Pascal, the inventor of the wheel-barrow, the discoverer of Logarithms, and the author of *Les Pensées*,—a great man if ever there was one,—we see an heroic striving for concordance, for the harmonious and well-ordered interplay of forces within him, which too often were arrayed one against the other, yet, he never attains to a complete, that is, a real unification of these conflicting elements. In the great French Bishop, and Saint, in Fénelon, we perceive indeed the same effort, but, it concludes in attainment. It does so, perhaps, because his mind and character are less complex, less fitted out with violent and contrarious qualities. The man's disposition, his very Soul is less multiplex.

So that the beautiful calm and order, the serenity in activity which he continually exhibits, were not so much acquired by conscious effort, as preordained and given in the grace of a character composed of not too many strains. Yet even in this saintly and vigorous nature there is evidence of labor, of spiritual discipline expended to the end of unification: but the labor is silent and withdrawn; the discipline guessed at, rather than visible. Lesser men, or to speak more precisely, men of a morally inferior order, though possibly endowed with a single gift,—in Bossuet's case, the gift of eloquence,—appear to attain with no struggle to a harmonization of their whole being; as if the stream and current of their desires moved all one way. The positive gift is single; and so is the man's moral nature, so that he is not called upon to govern, pacify, and bring to accord a host of fundamental moral antagonisms. It may be that multiplicity of giftedness implies a multifold character. At all events, the men who possess "infinite riches" in a little room," are sometimes troubled by the infinity which they possess.

The two men we are now approaching, were, it would seem, natures in the highest degree multiplex. They did many things well, and some of these surpassingly well. And their characters were composed of apparently irreconcilable qualities.

This is the main source of Lincoln's inconsistencies, and accounts for much of his reserve. Such a man explains himself with difficulty. And, if he at all was, as I suppose him to have been, this leads us to understand how it came about that he took so long in coming to the full and easy use, to the mastery of himself. We may almost speak of such a man, not as one, but as "many

men." Without doubt, other things slowed up the process of self-development, but this most of all. And this possession of opponent characteristics, of desires, tastes and qualities antagonistic the one to the other, with the consequent necessary effort on his part to govern and harmonize them, makes him the mysterious creature which, at the commencement, I asserted he was. Mysterious, and hence *romantic*. We know that this was a nature with heights and depths. He was not accessible, save on the surface and when he willed to be so; his friend, admirer and partner in the law for twenty years said, "he did not know him." Washington was complained of in like manner.

The Lincoln of stump-speeches and school books is a plain, good, honest and capable man; and, surely, he was all these things:—all except "plain." That he was,—till he became President,—rough in exterior, careless of what he wore, or of how he sat,—save on public occasions,—and that his manner, his address, air, and accent were those of the men of his time and place,—all this we have heard. But, can a man who is subtle and reserved,—who has a thousand unspoken thoughts for one that he utters,—can such a man be rightfully described as *plain*?

The truth, surely, is that Lincoln was complex as few among the sons of men are. He was not easily read by a mortal eye. He was contemplative and yet practical. Full of imagination, but this dangerous faculty was always kept in hand. A man often silent; and the greatest orator of his time. Of no Church or Creed, and yet in temper profoundly religious; an adroit, at times an unscrupulous politician; with a profound understanding of human nature in general and of the force of events;

capable of foreseeing, foreknowing the future; and hence a born leader of men; seemingly unprepared for executive duties and yet, presently, an efficient executive; and, one of the great Statesmen of the world. In his body he was incredibly muscular and tireless; in his mind capable of perpetual growth; forever in a state of transition; personally ambitious; an ardent and thoughtful patriot; exactly and habitually truthful, but not frank: inscrutable even to his friends; and yet wearing no mask of concealment; a man of pure mind and yet, delighting in the coarse humor which pleases the taste of the most of men: but not afraid, as the most of men are, to acknowledge the pleasure. He was all this: and, had no *money-sense*. He had an iron will; and a heart as tender as a woman's is averred to be. He was loyal, honorable, courageous,—with a calm but positive indifference to danger. He was indolent and disorderly in his personal habits. Accessible, even affable, as I have said, when the time had arrived to be these things. He was on occasion noticeably melancholy; and at times given to retirement and solitude. At other times he was the life of his circle, and a tremendous and uproarious laugh. He read little; and reflected much. He was merciful and wise. He had common sense, and there was about him a certain sublimity.

Lincoln possessed in a high degree the gift,—so fatal to some statesmen, and to many writers,—the gift of irony and sarcasm: he was a born satirist, and at a certain period, he deliberately ceases to employ this power. He was plainly, and visibly Christlike and he had the most logical mind of any American who has ever lived.

Of Washington's campaign in the Jerseys Frederick the Great is reported to have said, that it was the most bril-

liant military feat of the century. Whether this was the exaggeration of such a generous sentiment as we may well imagine an old and very great Soldier might entertain for one younger, it is still true, that students of military matters speak with more respect of Washington's capability in war, than was the custom some years ago. They tell us that if not in the first rank, he was none the less a great Leader of men in the field; a brilliant Tactician, and a master of grand strategy. He was,—for in any consideration of men, the body should come first,—he was an athlete and apparently incapable of knowing the sensation of fatigue. All about him the planters went bankrupt. He made his farm pay. He bred the finest live-stock. He kept his slaves in health, in temper and order. He was successful in all practical matters to which at any time he turned his hand. He drank his wine, hunted the fox, shot, fished, swam, raced his horses; imported from England novel and useful farming implements; and with these plows and harrows, the most elegant clothes, and the works of Voltaire, Shaftesbury, and Hobbes. He gambled, but always with moderation. He drank, and was never seen under the influence of wine. At times he attended divine service. And at other times he attended chicken-mains. He danced willingly and long. He liked the society of women of elegance and charm. He was always cheerful, and often gay. He cherished an unspoken, but profound love of Nature. His friends, few in number, were near and dear to his soul. All this was Washington. But, there is another Washington: and this other was the most reserved man of his time. Silent, when the need was to be silent. Of an inflexible will, firm to every purpose, resolute; the master of his own Soul, gaining complete control over a

temper which in his early life was both irascible and violent. But in later life this wrath of his was an engine of good; bursting out in the presence of cowardice or infamy, and putting its object to fear or shame. His indignation is described as at once controlled and terrible. He was dignified with the dignity of his period, and courteous in the forms of that period. But he possessed, too, that other courtesy: that consideration which comes from the heart; the want of which no forms can conceal. The danger of battle put this man into a pleasing exhilaration. In such conflict he became more and more himself, more and more capable of instant and correct military decisions. And this tall, dignified, powerful, reserved man, with his formal manners, his refusal to flatter men or masses of men; with his even, and often cold demeanor; his undoubted lack of the art and gift of the orator: this man was idolized by the plain Americans of his period. He fought the British for eight years, and a recalcitrant, and short-sighted Congress for the same length of time. He kept his army going. He was beaten: he retreated; he attacked again. Again he was beaten, and again and that shortly, he moved upon his foe. No longer a young man, he lay cold on the winter hills, and was half-starved at Valley Forge. He quelled mutinies. He had the mutineers shot. He was seen praying on his knees in the snow. He was heard using the most savage oaths. The prayer he is supposed to have left as a legacy to his country, is, perhaps, the only petition extant which a whole people can with a good conscience address to the Ruler of Nations. He could be coldly ironical, and deliberately discourteous, when he thought a lesson was due. When the great surrender took place and the Nation was established as one amongst the

Powers of the earth, he had but one wish,—he expresses it lightly, but he expresses it a hundred times:—the wish to retire into private life, to be once more a planter, and at home, “to sit under his own vine and fig-tree.” And yet the man’s personal ambition was a consuming passion. As we all know, under his vine and fig-tree he was not permitted to remain. He was made President, and not only during the eight years of his two terms, but, from his later youth, and thereafter, he was so great a statesman that it is difficult to speak of his powers with hyperbole. And of all American public men he was the least opportunist. He led a nation without falseness, or flattery, or phrases speciously devised to inflame the passion, or befool the intelligence. He was wise and kind, a man of humble heart; and pure intention. He had a great flow of spirits. And there was about the man a certain sublimity.

It may be wondered that I couple the names of these two men, who were so unlike in character and gift. I couple them because in all that counts, they were so amazingly alike. Their “values” were the same. They cared for the same things. Their moral sentiments were of kin. And they labored to the same ends in the same spirit. If taking up the lives of Richelieu, or Bismarck, or even Cromwell, and bathing ourselves in the emanation which proceeds from those great statesmen, we again turn our mind to Washington and Lincoln, they come before us as two brothers; brought up under differing circumstances, but of one blood, of one family;—men of one kind. Of one and the same ideal.

Keeping their great performance, the much they accomplished in view; and not forgetful of the extraordinary completion and perfection of character to which

they both attained, it would at least seem highly probable that their education could not have been so lamentably wanting as sometimes has been asserted. The *effect* was what we know. The cause must have been adequate to produce the effect.

The truth in the matter, I believe to be simply this: that in the matter of education and of culture we have very shallow and false ideas. We imagine education to be of books and of them only: a thing largely of words, and we misprize the education that life itself gives; and even in the matter of all that learning and discipline which is and only can be derived from books, we have, in our time, forgotten, how much can be learned from how little. If a man have few books, but those the best; and if he learns them thoroughly, he becomes thoroughly educated. The uphill work is not his. It is his who has a multitude of books, a vast diffusion of interest, an extension of ideas too large for one mind to control and cover.

Moreover, there is the thing we call the lessons of life: that is, the experience of men and things, without which culture is a studious nothing, and education produces no results.

The truth surely is that Washington and Lincoln were in this matter the most fortunate of men. For, however wanting all else may have been, they were both and at the right moment, subjected to an influence the most powerful in the world:— The influence of life on the Frontier. It is beyond my scope to enter fully upon this, the most enthralling subject that can well be imagined; but, as I have said, I believe there is no more life-giving experience than that of living with plain men, in a rude and sparsely settled community. It affords an insight into

human relationships, into human character and the bases of human Society that nothing else does in a like degree. Lincoln was subjected to one grave misfortune, or lack of that good fortune, which Washington possessed. As boy and youth the latter was thrown with men and women who were, decidedly, his superiors. Especially he was thrown into the company of Lord Fairfax. He imitated Fairfax, and that one older man's friendship, companionship, affection, and care, brought it about that Washington matured early. Lincoln till he was a man of thirty or beyond that age, was in contact with no man, and but one woman who was, in any sense his superior. Nothing so much retarded the man's development. He lost years of time. For, after all, the half of education and the more important half, is that contact with men and women who are superior to ourselves, whether in habitual elegance, and refinement of Soul, or in knowledge, or moral character and principle, or the possession of some happy and exquisite natural gift as of music, or poetry; or who are merely our superior in those human experiences on which they have reflected to some purpose. When such men and women are thus superior to ourselves we find ourselves in them. They call forth our latent and sleeping powers. We admire and hence we imitate; and whatever they have to give us, does not, as in books, come to us coldly, and by means of the understanding. It is, rather, something we absorb, as the soil takes in the beams of the sun, and with a like result in spontaneous inner productivity. For, though not by any means all education, yet surely all Culture comes to us from a living man or a living woman. The Greeks thought so, and it would be well for us if we could see it more as they did.

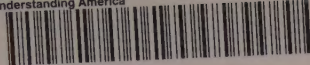
"The narrow, sordid and stupefying environment of Lincoln's youth."— "Washington's total lack of any adequate education."

It is strange that men can so think and so write. But, it is possible to live in America of today and not understand it; much more possible to misunderstand the America of yesterday.

The interplay of two great forces lies at the base of our comprehension of the men, the events, the civilization and Culture of our own country. We must first have some notion of what life is like, on the Frontier; in the wilderness; what it does to men; and we must have a lively, comprehensive, and feeling knowledge of Colonial Culture. For, after all, American and European Culture of today are no more than an extension, and branching out, and further proliferation, or a new application of some one branch of this same earlier and general movement of the European mind. Both Lincoln and Washington are examples of men, whose minds and characters were profoundly built up, educated, and cultivated by the combination of these two forces.



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